A CORDIAL FOR A Fainting Soule:

OR,

Some *Essaies* for the satisfaction of *doubting* wounded *Christians*, labouring under severall Burdens; Especially such as arise in Christians Spirits, From a *mistake of the grounds of Faith*: Or, from a misunderstanding of the *Nature & Acts of saving Faith*.

In which severall doubts, most ordinary to Christians in the beginning of their Conversion, are resolved; The *Ground* of Christians going to Christ cleared; The *Acts* of saving Faith are discovered; with the severall *weaknesses* with which they may consist.

Being the Sum of fourteen Sermons, delivered in so many Lectures in the Chappell belonging to *Chappel field-house* in *Norwich*.

With three severall Tables annexed; the first containing the Cases spoken to, directly or collaterally; The second giving the Reader an account of the Contents of each Sermon; The third of the principall things contained in the Tract.

The third Edition, corrected and enlarged.

By *Iohn Collings*, B.D. and Pastor of the Church of *Christ* in *Stephens* Parish in *Norwich*.

Hostis noster, adhuc in hac vita nos positos quanto magis nos sibi rebellare conspicit, tanto amplius expugnare contendit, eos enim pulsare negligit quos quieto jure possidere se sentit. Contra nos vero eo vehementius minatur quo ex corde nostro quasi ex jure propriæ habitationis expellitur. Greg. Mag. Moral. l. 23. in c. 33. Job.

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UM

TO THE
Right Honourable, the Lady
ELIZABETH, *Countess Dowager of* EXETER.

Madam!

Our *Honours* favour in accepting the first Dedication of these short Notes, hath imboldened me againe to present your Ladiship with them in a little more polished dress, for what is added to them, or taken from them as they were in the first Edition, I shall refer your Ladiship to my Epistle to the Reader. The first part of these Sermons presentes your Ladiship with a Christian *fearing where no fear is*, sent ing to go to the Lord Jesus Christ; would not one wonder (to consider it in the gross) what it is that in the Lamp of God should make the poor Creature so shy of laying hold upon him? Christ saith, *come!* and the Spirit saith, *come!* and the word, the Gospel saith, *come!* and the souls pressing

fing wants say yes and not withstanding all these, the poore soule cries, *I dare not come Lord*: Christ saith, *Those that come unto me I will in no wise cast away*. He complaines and cries, *you would not come unto me that you might have life*! yet the soul stands quaking, and crying, *Oh! I go? O that I knew I might go*! I have in the first part of these Sermons stept aside to such fearfull ones, and in my Master's name argued the case with them, and have found their Arguments too light to stay them from their Saviour. They say there is *a Lion in the way*. I have endeavoured to prove that there is *no Lion but in their own fancy*, and have endeavoured to make their rough way plaine. But (alas!) *who hath believed our report?* Satan is beleeved *who was a liar from the beginning*: Christ cannot gaine his credit (though he bee *Eternall truth*) Lord! *do we these fearfull ones and then they shall run after thee*! But I know your Ladiship is over these rough waies, and those first Sermons will be of little more use to your Ladiship then to remember your Ladiship (possibly) of some former unbeliefe, for happy is your Honour, if in your going to Christ you escaped all these humbling stones) that you may be more humbled, and to quicken your Honour to more thankfulnesse, and to mind your Ladiship that there are some in the world that need your Honours prayers, to lift them over the *blocks* that Satan laies in their way to heaven; *when thou art converted*! (saith Christ to *Peter*) *strengthen thy Brethren*

[illegible] helps much (Madam!) [illegible] Sermons presents your Ladiship [illegible] *doubting whether he be come to the Ba[illegible] yea, or no*; these (*Madam!*) are the [illegible] methods of Satan; first he [illegible] *under an awe of coming to Christ*; [illegible] hopes to hinder a soules *Salvation*; [illegible] that will not do, then he endeavours to perswade the Soule that *it is not come to C[illegible]*; thus he endeavours to hinder the souls *consolation*. I have in the latter Sermons parlyed a little with those Christians, and have perswaded them to *sit down*, because they are at home, and to be satisfied concerning the truth of their faith, notwithstanding the various *weaknesse* and *imperfection* may attend it in every Act. The Lord Iesus (Madam!) had a great care of his Saints joy. *These things have I spoken unto you* (saith he) *that your joy might be full*; and it was the whole designe of his last Sermon before his Passion to secure his Disciples a joyfull cheerely Spirit, *Let not your heart be troubled*, &c. *Iob*. 14. *v*. 1. beleeving is the way to do it, therefore hee adds, *Beleeve in God, Beleeve also in me*; and every Christian shall find that the *flux* and *reflux* of *joy* in the Soule will be according to the *influence of faith*, according to the *increase* or *want* of that. According as he hath said, *Beleeve and you shall be established*; And againe, *If you will not beleeve, you shall not be established*. Joy is the exuberance of an established Spirit. It was a great peece of

 Christs

Christs designed work to comfort, *Isa.*19.1,2,3. The Lord had anointed him to *bind up the broken hearted, to proclame liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*, ver. 2. ——*To comfort all that mourne, to appoint unto them that mourne in Sion beauty for ashes, the oyle of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heavinesse.* This was his commission which he opened, *Luke* 4.18. and accordingly hath he commissionated us, *Isa.*40.*v.*1 *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak comfortably unto her*; the readiest way to *comfort* is to *settle* the Spirit. If we can but resolve Christian doubts, we *fulfill their joy*. Now about doubting Christians, 1. *Some doubt whether they may come*; Others, 2. *Whether they be come to the Lord Iesus Christ*; the latter doubt it, Either 1. *From a mistake of the nature & acts of faith*: Or 2. *From a mistake of the effects of faith*. I have in this treatise spoken to those who doubt upon the two first accounts; for those who doubt the truth of their faith from a *mistake of the effects* of it, I have spoken to them in a second Part printed somwhat since, and in a third part which is now in the Printers hands. I have in those two parts but begun that work, and in those I have only discovered the power or weakness of faith, in order to its conquest of *Carnall and slavish feares, irregular dejections, and disquietments of Spirit, Carnall reasonings* and *Cavillings*. Faith hath also a power to resist and overcome *temptations*. It is my present work to shew the

power

power of faith, in order to the resisting and overcoming them. But I have made little progresse in that, making it my work to discourse at large concerning the *Nature and variety of temptations*, &c. the perfecting of that worke will aske much time, and if it pleaseth my God to allow me health & life to go through it (possibly) I may send that part after its fellows; but by what time I know not. I have a *winding Serpent* to follow, and whither, and how far, his *traile* will lead me, I cannot tel, and when I have done that, I have a *return* to make, and an *incomprehensible height* to take, discovering the infinite power in the Lord Jesus Christ for the strengthening of his Saints; and then I have a second returne to make, that I may shew how water may be drawn out from the fountain, and *strength* derived from the *rock*, both for the resistance of *temptations* in *general*, and some particular *temptations* that most incumber Saints in their way to heaven. This (Madam!) my next *platforme*, but *who shall live when God doth these things*? by such a worm as I am; in the mean time, I humbly beg your *Honours* pardon for my presumption in this tender of these poor *Meditations*, and in them the poore service of a worthlesse creature to your *Honours* soule, now the second time. The God of heaven fill your *Honour*, with his *Consolations*, and deliver your Ladiship from the *wrack* of a *wounded Spirit*, and grant to your *Honour* to stay out of Heaven many daies for the *glorifying* of his

his name is *converting and building* up his people, yet to be going apace thither, and not loosing the sight of it till you be safe downe in it. Madam! I am

Chappel-field-house
Iun. 1651.

The meanest Servant of the Lord Iesus in the service of his Gospel.

IOHN COLLINGS.

TO

To the Reader.

Reader,

Bvlt a word to tell thee whither thou art going, and thou shalt passe on. Thou hast here presented thee a second Edition *of fourteen Sermons Printed for thy use some few yeares since, the haste my friends were in to get them out of my hands then together with the oversight of the Printer, hath occasioned some alterations, none in any thing of the Doctrine, for I know not how I should looke thee in the face if I were conscious of delivering any thing, as an* Eternal truth of God *to people at one time, and deliver the quite contrary a yeare or two after, and intitle the* Eternal God *to that too, the alterations thou wilt find are in the ordering of the* Method, *in changing the* Text *for some more apposite, in altering the* Prefaces *to the severall Sermons, in adding some* Marginal Annotations, *cutting off some* superfluous expressions, *correcting the Printers* mistakes, *leaving out something concerning the* consistency of doubtings *with true faith, and the last Sermon concerning the difference of* doubting *in the Elect and Reprobates, (because I intend a particular discourse concerning* doubtings, *to which those pages will be more fitly added) but the most considerable* alteration *is the* interposition *of one intire Sermon, which is in number the ninth, concerning* Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, *in order to which thou wilt find a considerable* interposition *also in Sermon 6. where thou shalt also find my grounds of doing it. It is a truth that there is a* reliance *upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in the lowest degree of true faith; but I think it is more fully expresst by* receiving Christ: *I have propounded my thoughts in it, Consider and Judge. There is, I confesse, a new way found to heaven, which if it were as* true *and safe as it is new,*

would render Treatises of this nature useless, viz. A constant full perswasion that Christ is mine, and I am his, without the least questioning or examining my title or interest: *I confess (Christian!) if I could have found this way either* in the Word of God, *or the* examples *of the* Saints (*I meane not the* slippery miscalled *Saints of our Age, but) the* stedfast, close-walking *Saints of former Ages, I should have commended it to thee, If I durst have been so bold as the* Antinomians, *to have told thee that Doubtings,* argue no faith, *when our Saviour doth but say they argue* little faith; *I should have put my Pen in my Standage, and have made a quick dispatch of such Cases as these are; but it is a rule which thy experience will find true,* Nihil magis certum quàm quod ex dubio certum est, *Nothing is more certaine to the soule than what is confirmed to it after much doubting. I know never a way to heaven but there is a* Divel *attends, and he is not tongue-tied; we have a promise to be* succour'd *in* temptations, *not to be* freed from them: *Christian, I wish thy perfection; But* Sola nostra perfectio est imperfectiones nostras agnoscere, *It is our only perfection to acknowledge our imperfections. The Lord keep thee under a* due light *of thy weaknesses, if they do make thee doubt sometimes, blessed be God, there is* cure *for them in the Gospell, it is far better for thee to live doubting (yet beleeving) though thou wantest* perswasion *to thy dying day, than to live in a* fooles paradise *of a false* perswasion *all thy life time, and when thou art dying, doubt whether that perswasion were ever good yea or no. The Lord keep thee (Reader!)* stedfast *in the faith,* humble *in thine own eyes* jealous *over thine own heart, till the time comes when thou shalt doubt no more, but live by* sight, *and not by* Faith. *This is the prayer of*

Chappel-fild house
Jan. 15. 1651.

Thy poor worthless Servant in the
Gospel of our Lord Jesus,
JOHN COLLINGS

A short Table of those severall Cases of Conscience which in the following Treatise are spoken to more fully or Collaterally, the leters of which are noted with an *Asteriske*.

Ser. I. *WHether it be necessary that humiliation should in a soule go before faith?*

Ser. II. 2 *Whether I may refuse to beleeve, because I think I am not enough humbled? Comfort and direction for a soule under that affliction.*

Ser. III. 3 *Whether I may refuse to beleeve, because I know not whether I am elected or no? How to satisfie a Christian under that affliction.*

Ser. IV. *Whether I may refuse to beleeve, because I am a great sinner, and as I think too unworthy of mercy? how to satisfie a Christian under that affliction.*

Ser. V. 5. *whether I may refuse to beleeve upon a conceit that I have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost? How to ease a spirit under that burthen.*

Ib. * 6. *Whether every sin against knowledge, every denying of Christ, every hating our brethrens goodness, be this sin or no?*

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Ser. VIII. 8. *Whether true faith may consist with doubtings, and how in the same soule?*

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Ser. VIII. 10. *Whether a Christian may conclude his faith is not true, because he thinks he doth not assent to the whole Word of God?*

* 11. *whether the true beleever can at any time doubt whether the Scripture be the word of God or no?*

* 12. *Whether a Christian may not be tempted to doubt it, and yet not doubt it, and how to know such a temptation from our own corruption?*

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* 16. *Whether a Christian may truly relie upon Christ and the promises, and yet not at all times find an equal reliance upon all the promises; but that he can at sometimes, as he thinks, more adhere to some promises than other, and in generall better depend upon Gods spirituall promises for grace and heaven, than his promises made to us for sufficiency for this life?*

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SERM. I.

LUKE 5.17.

And the Apoſtles ſaid unto him, Lord increaſe our faith.

WHen the Jaylor fell downe at the Apoſtles feet, *Acts* 16.30. and ſaid, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* The Apoſtle anſwers, *Beleeve in the Lord Ieſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* When the Ruler feared, Chriſt ſaith, *Be not afraid, only beleeve*, *Mar.* 5.36. when the poore man came for mercy for his ſon, *Mar.* 9.32. Chriſt tels him, *If he could beleeve, all things were poſſible to him*: When we pray, if we can but *beleeve we ſhall receive*, we ſhall ſurely not faile. Many glorious things are ſpoken of this mother of graces, that faith ſeemes to be the whole duty of man.

Demoſthenes was askt, how many things were neceſſary for a Orator, he anſwers three; Firſt, action, ſecondly, action, thirdly, action; meaning, action was more then all. And truly, if any ſhould aske me, what

is the *unum neceſſarium*, the one thing neceſſary for a Chriſtian, I would ſay, *faith*; if he ſhould aſke me again, I would ſay *faith*; if the third time, ſtill I ſhould ſay *beleeve*: To the firſt, *pray for faith*; to the ſecond, *uſe faith*; to the third, *grow and increaſe in faith*. Faith and beleeving, is the whole duty of a Chriſtian, in a ſafe ſenſe; for it ſuppoſeth humiliation, and it commandeth newneſſe of life. Preparatory qualifications are but faiths harbingers, to prepare a roome for it; and the works of ſanctification are but faiths retinue, fed from Faiths table, and accordingly maintained as Faith is more or leſſe ſtrong, and able to maintaine them. This hath made the devill more beleaguer the Caſtle of Faith, then all the other petty holds (comparatively) that a Chriſtian maintaineth againſt him: That as the King of *Aram*, 1 *King*. 22. 31. ſaid to his thirty and two Captains over his Chariots, *Fight neither with ſmall nor great, ſave onely againſt the King of Iſrael*; ſo the Devill ſeemes to make it his great deſigne to fight, and to have given it as his ſole or chiefeſt injunction, to the Captaines of his Chariots, to all his forces, and all his inſtruments, *to fight neither with ſmall nor great, but onely againſt the King of graces the Chriſtians Faith*. Now all of Faith is, Firſt, either the Doctrine of Faith; Or ſecondly, the practice of Faith; The Devill hath muſtered his forces againſt both; firſt, againſt the Doctirne of Faith. It is a note of *Chemnitius*, that there have been more dangerous Hereſies about the Doctirne of Faith, then any one Doctrine in Chriſtian Religion: He knowes dirt in the fountaine will pollute the ſtreames. Secondly, Nor hath he leſſe, but indeed far more malice againſt the Practice of Faith; he underſtands well enough, that it is not knowing and having, but acting Faith, that doth the Chriſtian good. This makes him do what he can, to perſwade the ſoule to reſt in a falſe faith, and hinder

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the soule from beginning to act a true Faith, or darken the soules sence of Faith; or if all will not doe, yet he will turne every stone to hinder the growth, and increase of Faith; that every Christian had need with the Apostles here pray, *Lord encrease our faith.* The occasion of these words, is an hard Lesson, that Christ had been teaching his Disciples, *ver.*3,4. concerning forgiving injuries, *they must forgive foure times in a day*; upon this the Apostles say unto the *Lord, increase our Faith.* The words are a prayer, in which you may observe,

1. The supplicants, the Apostles.
2. The Supplicated, the Lord.
3. The Supplication, *increase our Faith.*

We may consider the prayer, either in it selfe, *absolutely*, or with the former words, *relatively*; Relatively, and so wee may learn this Doctrine.

First, *That hard duties and strength to them, must be done and got by prayer from God.* 2. Mark what they pray for, as the means to convey strength into their soules to this duty, That is *Faith*: note, 1.

Secondly, *That Faith in the soule, is that which quickens and instrumentally strengthneth the soule to difficult duties of obedience, and especially to this duty of forgiving injuries.* 2.

If we consider the words in themselves absolutely, as a prayer, we may note these things. 3.

That even the Apostles had need pray: they are not got beyond prayer, the best of Christians are under the duty of prayer. 1.

They say to the Lord, *All our prayer ought to be directed to God.* 2.

Thirdly, the prayer it selfe is, *Lord increase our Faith,* for an increase of Faith; in it wee have something suggested and implyed, that is, That they were sensible their faith was weak: *The best of Christians are and* 3.

ought to be sensible, as of their imperfection in all graces: so especially, of the grace of faith. 2. We have something here expresst, they pray for an increase of Faith: First

5. they pray to God [to the Lord] *It is God onely that can increase Christians Faith:* they pray for it; *The way for us to have our Faith increased from God, is to pray to him.*

6. Lastly, the Apostles pray, Lord increase our Faith. *It is the duty, not onely of the weakest, but even of the strongest Christians, as to be sensible of weaknesse, so to labour and pray for the increase of their Faith.* I intend not to handle all these in their order, but to pick out one of them, to build a large discourse upon: I shall pitch upon the sixth.

The Apostles praying for their increase of Faith, argued their sense of the weaknesse and imperfection of their Faith.

Doctr. The Doctrine is this: *That as the best of Christians have weaknesse and imperfection in their Faith, and it is their nature to be sensible of it, yea and their duty too, so it is also their duty to labour and strive against it.* This I might make good from Scripture, from severall places in the severall branches.

1. They may have weaknesse and imperfection in their Faith, *Mat.6.30. ca.8.26. ca.14.31.* in all which place, Jesus Christ checks even those which were his Disciples, for their little Faith; and yet in checking them for little Faith, he acknowledgeth they had some faith. So,

2. For the second branch it were easie to prove, that the child of God will be sensible of the weaknesse of its grace, especially this grace of Faith; take but one instance of it, *Mar.9.24. Lord I beleeve, help my unbeliefe,* and so 1 *Cor.13.9,12.*

And for the third Branch, that they will labour and strive against it, hee prayed, *Lord help my unbeliefe,*

Mar.

*Mar.*9.24. The Apoſtles pray, *Lord increaſe our faith*; to which we may adde that known place, *Phil.* 3.13. *I count not my ſelfe that I have attained to it, but one thing I doe, I forget that which is behind, and endeavour my ſelf to that which was before, &c.* Beſides the experience of the Children of God is abundant proofe, for every particular. I might alſo give many reaſons: Firſt why the Faith of Gods children is weak. As,

Firſt, *becauſe the ſtate of mortality is imperfect*, 1. *Cor.*13.9,10,11,12. 1.

Secondly, *Becauſe of the inconſtant apprehenſions of a gracious heart here*: It is not alwaies high water, or full moon, in a gracious heart; the Sun will be in the eclipſe ſometime, and the Moone in the wane. Now we ordinarily beleeve by ſight, it is an hard thing to make Faith out-run the eye, *Ye have ſeen (ſaith Chriſt) therefore you beleeve*, John 20. 2.

Thirdly, another caſe may be *the multitude of our renewing corruptions*: The bowl of Faith runs nimbly, if the ground of the ſoul be even, but ſo long as the ground that it runs on is rugged, we muſt expect Faith ſhould meet with rubs, and be a ſhort caſt ſometimes, and ſometimes more home. Doubts and fears are rubs in the way of Faith, and all Chriſtians know, that they are the creatures of mortality, and the attendants of corruption. There is a great deale of reaſon you ſee, why the Apoſtles Faith ſhould be weak, *In many things we ſin all, and the more we ſin, the leſs we beleeve.* 3.

There is much reaſon too may be given, why the weak (if true) beleever ſhould bee ſenſible of his weakneſſe. As,

Firſt, *If we conſider, that it is his work to be conſtantly laying his heart to his eye*; The workman, by laying the timber to his eye, often ſees how far it differs from the ſquare; The Chriſtian, by laying his heart to his eye, ſees the crookedneſſe of it, and how much it 1.

wants, and the irregularity in the best Christian is not so little, but the examining eye will discover it easily.

2. Secondly, *If we consider that as the beleever laies his heart to his eye often, so he laies the square to his heart alwaies*: The Carpenters eye may deceive him, if hee thinks it doth, he laies the square to it, and that mends the error of his eye; The square of a Christian is Gods Word, the Christian layes it to his heart, considering how much faith that requires, and discovering how much disagreement there is between his heart and that, *Psal.*119. 105. *The word is a light to my feet, and a lanthorn to my paths, Psal.*19.11. *By the judgments of the Lord David was made circumspect.* And,

3. Thirdly, if we consider *that the Christian is not selfe-opinionated*: He cares not for false glasses, and is more apt to behold his graces in a diminishing then a multiplying glasse; the sincere Christian concerning himselfe, is as ready to miscall a mountaine a mole-hill, as the hypocrite is to misjudg every mole-hil a mountain; almost as ready to miscall his good evill, as the other to nickname his evill good.

And for the third Branch of the Doctrine, *That as it is the duty of Christians to be sensible and groan under the defect of Faith, so it is their duty (and they will) not stand still but strive and pray for an increase of it*; Much reason might be given for that too. As,

1. First *From the nature of the spirit of God that worketh and dwelleth in them*: Faith is the spirits worke, 1 *Cor.* 12.9. Flesh nor blood never revealed it. Now the spirit *is a quickning spirit*, 1 Pet.3.8. *It is life*, Rom 8.10.

Where there is a principle of life, there will bee growth: *It is a working spirit*, that phrase wee have often, *The spirit which worketh in you*, &c. Now the spirits work is not to undo what it hath done, but to work further and more. Se-

Secondly, if we conſider *The end of the Chriſtian's acting of all his graces*, Phil. 3. 13. The Apoſtle expreſſeth it fully: perfection is his butt, he knows hee muſt draw his bow with all his ſtrength, and his arrow to the head, if he means to reach the butt, and he ſhall not hit it neither. The Chriſtians voice is, *Heb. 6. 1. Let us go unto perfection.* It is the hypocrite ſets himſelf bounds in Religion, and ſayes hither will I goe and no further. And to adde no more, 2.

Thirdly, *The Chriſtian knowes, that the more he hath of Faith, the more he hath of Chriſt*: hee knowes that there is depth of ſweetneſſe in Chriſt, that can never be ſadomed; ſomething more to bee underſtood when he underſtands as much as he can of him; when the ſoul hath as much as its narrow hand can graſpe of him, whole Chriſt is too big to be incloſed in mortall armes: Now the ſouls knows that Faith is the hand muſt graſp that eſſence of ſweetneſſe, the arme that muſt claſpe him, and he knowes that the longer his arme of Faith is, the more he ſhall graſp of him, though he ſhall never bee able to comprehend immeaſurable Chriſt, *Eph.* 3. 16, 17, 18. This makes him alwaies complain of his dwarfiſhneſſe, that his hand of Faith is not big enough, and his arme of Faith is not long enough, he cannot get in ſo much of Chriſt into his ſoule as he would do; this makes him pray for an encreaſe of Faith, and ſo often complain of the ſhortneſſe of his arme, hee cannot believe as he would: This makes him ſay with our Apoſtle here, *Lord encreaſe my Faith.* 3.

I come now to the application: and here is matter of Conſolation and Exhortation.

For all Chriſtians, eſpecially thoſe that are moſt ſenſible of the weakneſſe of their Faith. There have been and are more dwarfs beſides thee; Chriſtian Perfection is a white was never hit, the beſt Archers come a handfull ſhort. It is indeed the marke at which every one ought 1 *Conſ.*

ought to levell his arrowes, but all the ſouls of Chriſtians, like the arrowes of *Ionathan*, have flowne, *ſome over into glory, ſome ſhort, ſome on this hand, ſome on that*, none hath hit the marke. Be of good comfort Chriſtian, weak Faith is Faith, little ones are true children of the Father, that caſts none away that comes (though creeping) to him: Heaven hath room for babes as well as men. A child may pull the latch of heavens doore, and goe in, and be welcome to the knee of the King of Glory, to the boſome of him, *Iſa.* 40. 11. *Who feeds his flock like a ſhepherd*, and carries *the lambs in his boſome*. Jeſus Chriſt hath his armes full of tender ſucking lambs, or at leaſt, that were ſo upon the earth. The youngeſt Chriſtian, if he be an heir, is of age to take up his land in heaven, nonage is no bar. The Garden of God hath more ſlips then old ſtocks in it, now indeed they are become ſtocks, but here they were but tender ſlips while Chriſt took them up out of the land of grace and tranſplanted them. But,

Exhor. Secondly, Is it ſo, that the beſt of Chriſtians have but a weake Faith, in compariſon of that perfection wee ought to aſpire to, and that it is the duty of Chriſtians to be ſenſible of it, and pray and ſtrive againſt it? Let us all then looke upon it as our duty; Let us pray, *Lord increaſe our Faith*; Let us ſtrive after that we ſhall never attaine to, even *perfection*, *Heb* 6. 1.

Now here many directions might be given.

The firſt I will give ſhall be to remove thoſe doubts and miſapprehenſions which hinder the growth of it, &c. From hence ſhall I take my riſe, for a ſubject which with the bleſſing of God I do intend for ſome time to inſiſt upon, to ſatisfie the ſouls of ſome poor Chriſtians, in thoſe ſcruples which may perplex them, touching this grace of Faith.

The removing of which, will not a little conduce to the increaſing of this grace in their ſouls: I will begin with

with the first. And here though I spend many Sermons, I trust I shall not be tedious, having intended to make it my worke, in these Lectures, to satisfie doubting Christians in cases of conscience, and to begin with those which concern this radicall grace at which the Devill bends so much of his force and malice. And I shall first speake to such as arise from the misapprehension of the grounds of beleeving. 2. To such as arise from a mistake of the nature and acts of Faith. 3 To such as proceed from a mistake of the effects of Faith.

Therefore wouldest thou grow in Faith, remove those scruples which hinder the beginning and progresse of Faith in thy soule. Direct. 1.

There are two notes of a weake Faith, in a gracious soule.

1. *Apprehensions that it neither doth nor may beleeve.*
2. *Fears of a false Faith.*

First, A *sence of no Faith.* Many a soule doth beleeve, that perswades it selfe it neither doth nor ought to beleeve; you shall often meet with Christians, and especially in the beginning of their conversion, that will cry out, *O they cannot beleeve, nay what have they to do to beleeve?* Faith were but a presumption in their soule if they could hatch it up: Or if not so,

Secondly, *Yet you cannot make them think that they do beleeve, no, Faith and they are strangers, &c.* 2.

Now as it is in the diseases of the body, the cure is scarce wrought untill the cause be first discovered and removed; so it is likewise in the troubles and disquietments of the soule, we shall scarce be able to remove them out of the soules way, unlesse we first finde how they came there, and if we can but truly understand the cause, we shall easily remove the effect.

In generall, we must know these complaints are to be understood concerning the acts of Faith, *I dare not*

or cannot, or do not [*believe*] *that is, apprehend and apply, and rest upon Christ as my Saviour.* We speake not of Faith as it is an infused habit, and the gift of God to us, but as it is an inherent grace, and operative in us. Now then we will,

1. Enquire what the causes of such complaints in gracious souls may be.
2. We will consider, how to satisfie the soule in such troubles and scruples.

We wil first enquire the causes of their troubles that lie under the opinion that they ought not to cast themselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ; no, they have no right to go to Christ. What is there in the Lampe of God that so affrights these poor soules? What is it that makes them so startle at the name of Faith, and so shy of going to Christ? The cause is usuall.

1. *Either a mistake in the ground of beleeving, or,*
2. *A mistake of their own condition.*

Oft-times the cause is a mistake in Christians of the ground of beleeving, and so there is a threefold mistake ordinary.

1. Some Christians judge their preparatory qualification to be grounds of Faith, and for want of these durst not believe.
2. Others conceit some selfe-righteousnesse, and cleannesse should be a ground of beleeving, and finding the contrary in themselves, they are afraid to go to Christ.
3. Others judge their ground of beleeving should be some knowledge of Gods hidden decrees, and because they cannot see they are elected, they dare not goe unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Sometimes the cause is a Christians mistake of his own condition, When a Christian thinks he hath sinn'd the unpardonable sinne, and upon this conceit he is hinder'd from going to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will begin with the first of these.

Some poor soules startle at comming to the Lord Jesus Christ, and are afraid to lay hold upon the promise, because they want the encouragment of a broken heart for sinne: they cannot think that their soule was ever yet enough humble for sinne: they doe not onely rightly conceive that the humbled broken soule is the subject of Faith; but they conceive their humiliation to be a ground of their faith, and their warrant and encouragement to goe to Christ by Faith, yea, and such a measure of humilation too. Hence when you call upon them to beleeve, they tell you,

Alas wee believe? Gods justice proceedeth according to method. First, he useth to pull downe, then to exalt; first to cast to Hell, then to lift to Heaven. Alas! I was never yet enough humbled, I never saw hell yet enough, were my heart enough wounded, then I might go for healing.

Now, for the removing of this obstacle of faith in a soule, two things must be enquired into.

1. Whether humiliation goeth before Faith, yea or no.

2. If it doth, what may comfort a soul under this affliction of spirit, and help it over this block; and encourage it to go to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the ground of my more particular discourse upon these two subjects, you may please to cast your eye upon that place of Scripture,

Mat. 21. 32. —— *And you, when you had seen it, repented not afterwards that you might believe.*

Now for this weighty question, *Whether Humiliation goeth before Faith in the soule or no.*

It is a question variously tossed, and determined, understood, and concluded in these times, in which God hath cast our lot; some utterly denyed any such work, some too eagerly contending for measure, some limi-

ting Gods dealings, others misinterpreting, if not wilfully mistaking the tearms. It will not therefore I trust be a lost labour, first, to enquire the truth of that question, which is ordinarily thus termed.

Quest. *Whether Faith goeth before Repentance, or Repentance before Faith.*

Now for the fuller determination of it, I shall first explain the terms, Then conclude the truth, and prove it by Scripture and Reason; And lastly, answer those Objections ordinarily made against it.

First, I will spend a little time to open the termes, which (when rightly explained) I am confident will put the question out of question, to those Christians that have any experience of the Lords dealings: for the ambiguity of every term, hath only darkned the clearnesse of this truth.

1. First, let us understand what is meant by *Faith*, both in the kinde, and in the act. There are divers kinds, and divers acts of Faith. There is an historicall Faith, which consists onely in the knowledge and assent to the truth of an History, There is a Faith of miracles, There is a temporary Faith, and there is a true justifying Faith. The question is onely to be understood of the latter, which hath also severall Acts. First, Assent: Secondly, Relyance: Thirdly, Perswasion. The question is to be understood of the second Act, *Whether God gives the soule power, comfortably and truly, to rely upon Christ, and the promises for salvation, before he hath wrought Repentance in the soule.*

2. Secondly, the term *Repentance*, is subject to ambiguity too. Repentance is sometimes taken largely for the whole work of conversion, and so godly sorrow is an effect of it; sometimes strictly, and when wee speake of repentance in the question, we only understand the first parts of it, consisting in conviction, contrition, and humi-

humiliation, by which the soule is carried out into a loathing of it self, both for it's sin, and in it's righteousnes: And the question is, *Whether God doth not work in a soul, a sorrow of heart and loathing of it selfe for sin, before the soul hath power to rest upon Christ for salvation, and rely upon him as it's Saviour.*

Lastly, we must safely understand what is also meant by *going before*: First, we do not understand [by going before] a *precedency in Gods hidden operation*, he at once infuseth the habits of grace into the soul: But secondly, by going before, we understand *a going before in a gracious Act*, and in *a comfortable apprehension*. Neither farther is the question to be understood, as if we thought Humiliation went before faith, as *a work wrought by our own strength*. We acknowledge Humiliation to be *a work of Gods special grace in the soul*. And the question is plainly thus. 3.

Whether God ordinarily gives a poor soul power to act Faith, by relying upon Christ, and the promises of life and salvation, before, in some measure, he hath brought the soule to be sensible of it's lost and undone condition?

We say he doth not.

We will grant to our Brethren that are unsatisfied concerning this truth.

First, *That a man must believe, before he can mourn*: But how? not by any saving act of justifying Faith. He must beleeve there is a sin pardoning Saviour, that hath fulnes and freenes of mercy, and enough in his fulnesse for him; and that, though he hath sinned, yet there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Then *he put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope*. 1.

Secondly, we will easily grant, *that a man must have saving and justifying Faith, before the work of repentance and humiliation will be perfect in his soule*: As we maintain it to be a precedent work, so we deny it not to be a subsequent effect. 2.

3. Thirdly, we will grant, that *it is a work to be done by our own ſtrength*, it is Gods work, onely our diſpute is concerning Gods uſuall order in working. The ſame ſpirit that works a power in the ſoul of dependence upon Chriſt, takes alſo *away the heart of ſtone, and gives an heart of fleſh.*

4. Fourthly, we grant, *that the habits of theſe graces are both together in the ſoul.* We only queſtion which God gives the ſoul power to act firſt.

5. Fiftly, *we diſpute not concerning the meaſure, but concerning the thing.* We do not queſtion, whether the ſoul muſt be thus far, or thus much, or thus long humbled, before God will give it power to act Faith, by a comfortable reliance on Chriſt. We only ſay it muſt be humbled.

6. Sixtly, *we do not limit the workings of God, and ſay it is ſo neceſſary on Gods part, that he cannot give the ſoul power comfortably to apply Chriſt and the promiſes: but we ſay, it is not his uſuall courſe and ordinary way of diſpenſing grace, to do it.* Yet his dealings are various, he works not alike in all; he may, and ſometimes doth go out of his beaten road. The queſtion is not concerning neceſſity on Gods part, but only concerning a neceſſity on our part; not concerning his miraculous power, but his gracious will; not concerning any extraordinary operation, but concerning his ordinary way of diſpenſations. This is the queſtion truly ſtated, which I ſhall endeavour to maintain as a truth of God, in this following poſition.

The queſtion truly ſtated The Negative part maintained.

That God in his ordinary way of Diſpenſation of Speciall Grace, doth not give a poor ſoule power to apprehend Chriſt, as its Saviour, and accordingly to reſt and rely upon him for ſalvation, before in ſome meaſure or other he hath brought ſuch a ſoule to be ſenſible of it's low condition by Nature, and humbled it for it's going aſtray from him.

This

This I ſhall labour to make good, From Reaſon, Scripture, and Experience; and cleare from thoſe objections, and Arguments, brought againſt it.

First, *The ſoule cannot come in to Chriſt, till it be gone in ſome meaſure out of it ſelfe, nor can the ſoule know that Chriſt is come unto it till it knows it is gone out of it ſelfe.* The reaſon of the latter is plain, for it is impoſſible the ſoul ſhould know that to be, which cannot be. But Chriſt cannot come into a full ſoul. Now the ſoul is not gone out of it ſelfe, nor will it go out of it ſelfe, till it ſee the danger of continuing in it ſelfe; this danger works fear, this fear ſorrow, and this ſorrow is humiliation.

Secondly, *Chriſt will only come into ſuch a ſoule, and give ſuch a ſoule power to reſt, and rely upon, and comfortably to apprehend him, as will prize him. But till the ſoule be humbled, it will never prize Chriſt.* For the firſt, that Chriſt will only come into ſuch a ſoule as hungers and thirſts after him, it is plain by the many promiſes made to ſuch. But that ſoule that is emptied of it ſelfe, it is impoſſible but it ſhould loath Chriſt, according to that of the wiſe man, *Prov.* 27.7. *The full ſoul loatheth the honey comb.* The Apoſtle ſaith, *To you that beleeve he is precious.* If Chriſt be not precious to the ſoul, the ſoul doth not, will not, cannot, beleeve in him. Now ſo long as ſin is ſweet, and luſt ſweet, how ſhall Chriſt be ſweet to the ſoul? Is Chriſt and ſin both of a taſte, think we? *What fellowſhip hath light with darkneſſe?* (ſaith the Apoſtle) If Chriſt be precious to them that beleeve, then certainly ſin muſt be bitter to them that beleeve, if light and darkneſſe be contrary as the Apoſtle ſpeakes. But Chriſt is precious to them that beleeve. 2.

Thirdly, *That ſoul can never be willing to reſt upon Chriſt, that is not willing to leave ſin, for ſin and Chriſt are contrary:* and it is impoſſible for a man to pleaſe his luſts and Chriſt too. *You cannot ſerve God and mammon.* Now it is impoſſible that the ſoul ever ſhould leave ſin 3.

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(which is naturall unto it) and imbrace Chriſt, (whoſe goodneſs and ſweetneſs ſomething more then nature, more then fleſh and blood muſt reveal) before it be convinced, that ſin is vile and bitter. A reaſonable creature is acted by reaſonable principles. *Nabal* could ſay, *Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my fleſh, that I have killed for my ſhearers, and give it unto men whom I know not what they be?* *Who is* David? *and who is the ſon of* Jeſſe? (ſaith he) The fig-tree in *Jothams* parable ſaith, *Shall I forſake my ſweetneſs and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?* So ſaith a poor ſoule when it is proud; who is Chriſt? and who is the Son of God that I ſhould leave all? Sacrifice my luſt and my corruptions unto him? What! (ſaith the proud ſinner) ſhall I forſake my ſweet luſt and ſweet corruptions, to yield to Chriſt? The ſoul muſt be convinced that ſin is evill, yea, and the greateſt evill, or it wil never imbrace good. Now it is impoſſible that the ſoul ſhould be really convinced that ſin is the greateſt evill, and God the greateſt good; but the ſoule will be grieved, that it hath forſaken the fountain of living waters, the greateſt good, to cleave to the greateſt of evils. But why ſhould I dive into the diſpenſations of God, by the bucket of reaſon? Let us ſee what Scripture and experiences of the Saints of God, recorded in Scripture, tell us, *Matthew* 21. 32. * *And ye when you had ſeen it, repented not afterward, that you might beleeve:* A learned and pious commentator [*Zuinglius*] hath this note upon this Text, *Grace and mercy exhibited to the world in Chriſt, is not eſteemed by thoſe who do not feel their ſins and grieve for them.* Chriſt complains in the Text, that they would not repent that they might beleeve, not that they would not beleeve that they might repent. Will you know *to whom the promiſes are made, for whom Chriſt comes, and to whom he comes; He came*

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* *Porro ex eo quod Chriſtus dicet* τῷ μεταμεληθῆναι ὕστερον τοῦ πιστεῦσαι *quidam colligunt fidem non eſſe pœnitentiæ partem ſed ejus conſequens, ſciendum vero per* μεταμέλειαν *hoc loco non intelligi* ὁλικῶς *totum opus converſionis, ſed* μερικῶς *priorem pœnitentiæ partem, contritionem ſcilicet, quæ omnino requiritur antequam fide Chriſti beneficia in verbo Evangelii oblata poſſumus apprehendere. vide* Gerar. Harm. Rotterodami. c. 151. col. 221. 2.

to seek that which was lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He is a Physitian, and he tels us, *The whole need not the Physitian, but the sick.* He hath told you, that *He fils the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away.* He hath pronounced them *Blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted,* that are *poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God;* that *Go out weeping & carrying precious seed, for they shall return rejoycing, and bring their sheaves with them.* Now certainly, if Christ Jesus only came into the world for such, and none can have any assurance that Christ came to save him, til he hath disclaimed his own righteousnes, and is convinced he is a miserable lost creature, Surely then they cannot beleeve before, for Faith is the uniting grace that knits the soul to Jesus Christ.

Isa. 55.1. Mat. 5.3,4,6. & 11.28. Rev. 21.6. Mat 9.12. Luke 19.10. & 15.4,6. Mat. 15.24. Psal. 126.6.

Secondly, *If the promises only belong to such as hunger and thirst, as are weary and heavy laden, & do not belong to them before they are so, then certainly they cannot beleeve before they are weary and heavy laden.* For the same instant that the soule beleeves, and is married to Christ, the same instant are the promises intailed to the soule, being it's proper jointure, *Gal.* 3.22. *Eph.* 1.13.

Thirdly, *If the blessing only belong to such, surely they must be such before they can act Faith, or else a beleever may be in the state of condemnation, and under the curse. But to such is the blessing pronounced,* Matth. 5. 3, 4,6.

Infinite Arguments might be drawn from Scripture; Shall we see a little experience. Let us search out Gods ordinary dealings: to whom hath he revealed himself in any comfortable apprehension? what beleevers can we finde in Scripture, who in coming to Christ had not their feet dipt in bitter waters? Shall we take that troop of converts at *Peters* Sermon? *Act.* 2.37. *They were pricked in their heart, and said unto* Peter *and to the rest of*

V. Brentii hom. ad loc.

of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we doe? O lost undone creatures? what shall we do? *Act.* 16. 29. The Jaylor came *trembling before* Paul and Silas, *and fel down at their feet, and said, sirs what must I do to be saved.* Take the great convert *Paul, Act* 9. What astonishing sorrow was he swallowed up in? he was even humbled to the grave before you read of his Faith: Let every Christian examine his owne experience, whether ever he should have received, or prized Christ, if he had not first been strucken with the sence of his own Misery. Enough hath been said for it, let us hear a little what can be said against it.

1. Obj. *No man will be humbled except he beleeve; what shall make me run to God and mourn, except I beleeve he will pardon?*

Ans We do not dispute of any Faith, but a justifying Faith. To beleeve, and be perswaded I may be pardoned, is not a distinguishing act of a justifying Faith, this was granted before; 'tis one thing to beleeve I may be pardoned, so may an hypocrite, 'Tis another thing to beleeve I am pardoned, or to rely on Christ for pardon, this is proper to a justified person, nor can he beleeve he is pardoned till he is humbled.

2. Obj. *Repentance is the effect of Faith, now the cause must alwaies go before the effect.*

Ans. We distinguished before of Repentance: Repentance hath two parts, The aversion of the soul from sin, and the conversion of the soul to God; the latter part of it is onely an effect of Faith, the former part of it, the turning of the soul from sin, is also an effect, but not only an effect, it is begun before Faith, though it be not ended till our life be at an end. Secondly, The turning of the soul from sin, and the imbitt'ring sin to the soul, is an effect of Faith, or rather a consequent of Faith, *viz.* a general common Faith in the beginning, but not alwayes a consequent of saving justifying Faith.

3. Obj.

3 Obj. *Chriſt muſt work this humiliation, or it is good for nothing: now if Chriſt be in the ſoule working humiliation, then there is Faith: Therefore Faith muſt go before humiliation.*

Anſw. Firſt, though Chriſt work this humiliation in the ſoul, yet it doth not follow that Chriſt is in the ſoul; for it may be a work of common grace, and Chriſt is not in every ſoule upon which his common grace works. But ſecondly, to anſwer more fully, I am of the minde of Maſter *Shepherd*, and Maſter *Hooker*, that although there be an humiliation which is indeed the work of common grace, which an hypocrite may have, yet there is an humiliation which is the work of ſpeciall grace, and that this likewiſe precedes the exerciſe of Faith: And although it is true, that Chriſt cannot be in the ſoule, but in the ſame inſtant the ſoule is in Chriſt, for Faith is the mariage grace, yet it doth not follow, that the ſoule is enabled by an act of Faith to apply Chriſt to it ſelfe, aſſoon as Chriſt is in the ſoul and the habit of Faith is infuſed into the ſoul; and therefore the queſtion is ſtated, not concerning the habit of Faith, but concerning the act of Faith; *viz.* Whether Gods gives the ſoule power to receive, relie upon, and apply Chriſt, or receive any comfortable apprehenſions of Chriſt, and the ſoule in reſpect of us (who can onely judge of the habit by the act) cannot bee ſaid to have Faith, before it hath acted humiliation or repentance: The queſtion is not which the ſoule muſt have firſt, in reſpect of Gods gift, but which it acts firſt for our apprehenſion.

4. Obj. *The preaching of this puts ſoules upon deſpaire, and hinders Faith, they do not beeleve, becauſe they cannot find that they are ſo humbled as God requires.*

Anſw. 1. The Sun muſt not be hid, becauſe it hurts ſore eyes: What is the truth of God muſt not be con-

ceaſed, becauſe wicked men and ſeducers grow worſe and worſe.

Secondly, No ſoule that is elected can deſpaire, if God hath given them to Chriſt, the Devill ſhall never pluck them out of his hand; the word muſt be preached, though to ſome it moſt prove *the ſavor of death unto death: To the Gentiles fooliſhneſſe.*

Thirdly, We do not ſay, they muſt repent to ſuch and ſuch a degree, mourn ſo many teares; wee diſpute not how much ſorrow there muſt be, but maintaine there muſt be ſome.

Fourthly, True ſorrow ought not to hinder Faith, for the end of it is onely to bring the ſoule to be willing to exercile the grace of Faith, by coming to Chriſt, reſting and relying upon him for ſalvation, &c.

5. Obj. *But God works not his acts of ſpeciall grace after the manner of men, he works them together, therefore faith and repentance are together wrought.*

Anſw. We diſpute not how God works them, but, how the ſoule acts them, not which is in the ſoule firſt, but which appeares out of the ſoule firſt. *Iacob* and *Eſau* may be twins, and in their mother womb together, but ſhall it therefore follow that they ſhal come out together? may not *Eſau* put out his hand before *Iacob*, and bee ſeen firſt by the mother and world too?

6. Obj. *But this is to take away free grace, to ſay God will not ſave a poore creature before it be thus and thus humbled.*

Anſw. 1. It is not to take away the freeneſſe of grace, but to teach men to take heed, that they do not turn the grace of God into wantonneſſe; it does not deſtroy free grace, to enjoyn qualifications and conditions of Gods own making.

Secondly, You may as well ſay it deſtroyes free grace, to ſay, none ſhall be ſaved but thoſe that beleeve, which is the expreſſe language of Scripture, *He that beleeveth not is damned already.* Third-

Thirdly, Free grace is eſtabliſhed hereby: For, 1. Is it not free grace to give a ſoule Chriſt, if for its ſins it will but mourn and be humbled and beleeve? Is it not a free gift to give a kingdom unto me, upon condition I will throw away a knife, with which I was about to cut my own throat? 2. We do not ſay, that this humiliation and precedent ſorrow, doth deſerve any ſuch free grace for the performance of the action, therefore the grace is ſtill free. 3. Wee ſay, that free grace works this humiliation, a man can as well break a rocke as break his own heart, without the work of this powerfull ſpirit, and the ſpirits operations are free, even like the wind that blows where it liſteth. *John* 3. 8. Wee exalt free grace, and make it yet more free; onely wee would not have men turne the grace of God into wantonneſſe to their owne confuſion; and therefore their vain objection, that this brings us again under the covenant of works, *(do this and ye ſhall live)* fals in pieces of it ſelfe; for we neither hold that it is in the power of any creature to do this, to break his heart and mourne for ſin, nor yet that any ſhall merit any Salvation by doing of it: We abhor that doctrine of merits, that God juſtifies either for any works of grace acted of our own, or for the merit of any graces which he hath infuſed into us.

7. Obj. *But when the Jaylor aſked* Paul, *what ſhall I do to be ſaved? he doth not ſay, mourn and be ſaved, or faſt and pray and bee ſaved, but beleeve and be ſaved; and when we read of the converſion of* Lydia, *wee doe not read, that ſhe had any ſuch humiliation as theſe Legaliſts talk of, the text only ſaies, that God opened the heart of* Lydia.

Anſw. 1. To that of the Jaylor, it is true, that *Paul* doth not ſay, mourn and be ſaved, &c. *Paul* had learned more wiſdome then to afflict the afflicted; the text ſaies, *He came trembling and fell at the Apoſtles feet.*

Now the Apostle seeing him thus amazed with terrour, bids him *beleeve*, and though he knew not what to do, yet he might be saved; and how this proves that there is no need of humiliation, let the discreet reader judge, because when the Jaylor was so terrified that hee was ready to dy, *Paul* doth not bid him still be humbled, but beleeve, therefore there is no need of humiliation. It is plain out of the Text, that his humiliation although it was sudden and short, yet it was strong: First, It made him tremble and fall downe at the Apostles feet: Secondly, it wrought fully to its appointed end, to beat the sinner out of himselfe; Sirs! saith hee, *What shall I do to be saved?* I know not what to do, is imployed; for if he had known what to do, he would never have askt, *what shall I do?*

O admirandam Metamorphosin, &c. v. Brentium in Loc. Divinus etiam horror occupavit non magis ex corporis periculo quam animæ. Lorinus ad Loc. Clarius apparet non evanido Dei timore fuisse concussum duntaxat: sed verè humiliatum, &c. Calv. ad loc.

Obj. *But some will say, his trembling and falling down was for feare the prisoners were gone.*

Answ. That is cleared out of the Text. *Paul* had cried unto him, *do thy selfe no harme; for we are all here*, after all this cometh his trembling, and crying, *what shall I do?* But Secondly, wee may shape another answer to it, *Paul* saith to the Jaylor, onely *beleeve and thou shalt be saved*; beleeving doth here include humiliation, *Faith is an act of an humble soule*, and no soule will or can beleeve, that hath not been truly humbled; therefore the great hurt that those do, that preach down humiliation under a pretence of preaching up Faith, is dealing too deceitfully with peoples soules: First, *Preaching onely Faith*, Secondly, *Perswading them that a sinner as a sinner, drunkard, whoremonger, &c. is the subject of Faith*, and not a sinner as an humbled sinner. For the example of *Lydia* and the Eunuch, which is all, that there is any pretence to boast of: We answer,

First, *That God opened her heart without any knocking, is easier for us to deny, then for them to prove.*

Se-

Secondly, (saith Master *Shepherd*) "*These were examples of soules converted unto God before, who did beleeve in the Messias, but did not know that this Jesus was the Messias, which they soon did when the Lord sent the means to reveale Christ, so that it doth not follow she had never sorrowed because shee did not then sorrow.* vid. Shepherd, Sound beleever, *p.* 54.

Thirdly. "*In examples recorded in Scripture* (saith he) *of Gods converting grace, do not think they had no sorrow for sin, because it is not set downe in all places, &. and quoteth,* 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14. Paul *was a Persecuter, but the Lord received him to mercy, doth it follow therefore he was received without humiliation? see the contrary,* Act. 9

Fourthly, *Gods workes are not alwaies alike* in all; therefore in stating the question, I put in *(in Gods ordinary way of dispensations) Elijah* went to heaven in a fiery chariot, but every one must not look to bee coacht thither: *See Mr* Shepherds *eight rules, concerning this, in his Sound beleever, à p* 48. *ad pag.* 57.

And now I leave every Christian Reader to determine, by Reason, Scripture and his own experience,

Whether Faith goes before repentance (or sorrow for sin) or whether that goes before Faith.

SERM.

SERM. II.

MAT. 21. 32.

And you when you had seen it repented not afterward that you might beleeve.

Chap. 2.

The way of comforting a soule under that trouble of conscience, I am not enough humbled, &c.

THe last day you may remember, I discust the question, Whether humiliation goes before Faith, or no: which being premised, I shall come now to speak something by way of satisfaction to such soules, as labour under this perplexity of spirit.

Ah! (saith a Christian) *I cannot beleeve, I dare not rest my soule upon Christ, nor upon the promises. Alas! I was never yet sufficiently humbled, were my heart broken enough, then I might be bound up by resting upon the promises. Would God lay me low enough, then I might hope to be exalted; but would you have such an hard flinty-hearted wretch as I, think I beleeve? what one that hath such a proud stiffe-neck? How is it possible, that I should*

should have any ground of Faith? Faith (they say) is a flower, that growes no where but just upon the brinke of the lake that burnes with fire and brimstone, it must bee bottomed upon the sense and pain of a lost condition; the way to be found is to be lost, could I bee weary and heavy loaden once, I might think to be eased by Faith.

This is the sad affliction that many a good but sadded poor soule groans under. Now for my more methodicall proceedings in speaking something to the satisfaction of poor soules, groaning under this trouble of spirit, I will first speak a word by way of premise; then I will offer some considerations to comfort a soule under such a perplexity and distresse of spirit; Lastly, I shall speake something by way of direction and caution.

Premise.

For the first of these by way of premise, We use to say, there is no errour but hath some truth in it; no ore but hath something of gold; as no field of wheat but hath some tares, nor scarce a field of tares but there is some ear or two of wheat: so it is in this complaint of the soule, here is something of truth, as well as something of mistake, upon what the complaint is grounded; that therefore no soule might presume from what I shall speak by and by, not to oile up a presumptuous soule, but to establish a fainting soule, Let mee premise,

I.

Frist, *That it is a truth, and that which must stand if all the world be found liars to it, That God seldome or never gives the soule power to apprehend and apply Jesus Christ, and truly to rest upon him, before that hee hath first of all shewed the soule its lost and undon condition.*

God makes humiliation to act first in the soule, in regard of our sight, and hence are the promises made, not to sinners as sinners, but to sinners as humbled sinners, I mean, that God hath humbled and brought low. I proved this sufficiently the last time, Christ came *to seek, and to save that which was lost*: not to *call the righte-*

ons but ſinners to repentance. I ſay this is a truth, and we muſt grant it, yea, and we muſt grant too, that it is according to the ordinary diſpenſations of his grace; and if any come to heaven another way, it is beyond Gods ordinary courſe of dealing with ſinners; for this is his uſuall courſe, firſt, to throw down to hell, then to lift up to heaven, and a rule muſt not be caſt away for one exception, nor a ſummer made with one ſwallow. And therefore let no ſoul preſume, and ſay, well, I can beleeve and reſt upon Chriſt, and yet I never was humbled; without queſtion there is a falſe applying and a falſe reſting upon the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and there are ſome that pretend they reſt upon Jeſus Chriſt, to whom Chriſt will bee as a bruiſed reed, and as a broken ſtaffe another day: See it plain, *Mat.*7.20,21. But on the contrary, there may bee and is a great miſtake upon this truth in troubled and fainting ſoules: And therefore I ſhall in the next place apply my ſelfe to them, to offer ſomething by way of conſolation to them, to ſupport and eſtabliſh them, and by way of ſuccour to them to ſtrengthen them againſt this temptation of Satan. For Faith is the radicall and fundamentall grace of the ſoul, and as he ſaid to his Souldiers, *Fight not againſt either ſmall, or great, but only againſt the King of Iſrael.* (He knew if hee were overthrown, his army would quickly be routed) So ſaith the Devill, if I can but overthrow his faith, and ſtave him off from the promiſes, I ſhall eaſily overthrow his ſoule; *Hee that beleeveth not is condemned already*; but if he gets that caſtle, he is ſafe: therefore I ſay, to throw the Devils ſnares out of the way, I ſhall offer ſomething to ſoules whoſe complaint is this, *O I cannot, I dare not beleeve*, I have not been humbled enough, &c.

1. First, *Be comforted, knowing that although God hath every where called for humiliation, and ſorrow of heart for ſin, yet he hath no where ſet a meaſure for it.* The pro-

promises are not made to sinners as sinners, (as Antinomians, and Libertines, tell us) they must make us a new Bible before they will shew us any such promises; but it is as true on the contrary, that they are not made to sinners just thus far, & thus deeply humbled. That there must be some, God hath revealed that in his word; but for the measure of it, God will have that to order and dispose as he pleaseth. Be comforted (Christian) that never man was damned for degrees of grace, for want of grace many a soul hath perished, but for degrees of grace never soul was yet in danger. Mustard-seed Faith is as much saving Faith, as the bulwork-Faith of assurance. God holds his bottle, as well to those eyes that from a sincere heart, drop one tear, this to day, and another to morrow, as for those that make their hands fountains of tears, and their eyes rivers of water, *Zac.* 4. 10. *Who hath despised the day of small things?* Do you remember Christ gathered up the fragments of the bread, which he had created, the least of thy tears is a Christall drop, if from the sincerity of the heart, the very *minimum quod sic*, the least of a penitent: Why wilt thou make a block in thy own way, and throw a bone in thy own dish? Why wilt thou set God a bound, as if hee could not or would not save thee, till thy sorrows flood had come up to such a land-mark, when God hath set thee no bound, saying, *Hitherto shalt thou goe, and no further?*

Secondly, *Consider, as God hath assigned no measure for thy humiliation, so neither can any mans set thee a pitch, to say whosoever is or shall be saved, shall be, and must be to this, or this degree humbled.* I say no man is able to do it, because Gods dispensations are various: God will not be tract in his goings, who hath found out his footsteps? *His wayes are past finding out*, they are like the way of an Eagle in the air. Now God hath many wise ends in the variety of the dispensations of his free grace: 2.

There are severall sorts of people, that God deeply humbles oftentimes.

1. As 1. *Those that he intends for some great service in his Church, either to preach the Gospel, for the conversion of so many*, as *Paul* Act. 9. *Or when it may be he intends, that they shall come out, and become witnesses for his truth*: These fine vessels, God usually hammers and files very much.

2. 2. *Such as God perhaps sees, have quick and high spirits, and will be enclinable to filthy pride*, The Lord layeth them low, that they may have their spirits tamed, and be brought into a lowly subjection to Jesus Christ; And this might be one cause of *Pauls* humiliation too, deeper then any other of the Apostles we read of.

3. 3 *Such as have been notorious publicke sinners*: *Manasses* must be brought to Babylon, laid in irons, then received to mercy; half hang'd, then the rope must be cut, and the man saved; just sinking in hell, then lift up by the chin; he had been a persecuter, he had made Jerusalem swim with innocent blood, and that might be another reason of *Pauls* so deep humiliation.

4. 4. And yet, *In these the wayes of God are not the same to our eye. Peter* an eminent preacher, yet we read of no such humiliation in him. *Mary Magdalen* a grievous devil-possest sinner, and yet we reade of no such sorrow in her: God will not be tract in his wayes, we must not know the maner of his workings with his Saints, he wil chuse whom he list, and why he lists, and he will bring them in how he lists, and when he lists, *Eccl.* 3. 11. *No man can find out the work of God, that he maketh from the beginning to the end.* Gods wayes are like the waies of a serpent upon a rock, and although I think with Master *Shepherd*, that we cannot conclude, because we do not reade of the like humiliation of *Lydia*, and others of the Apostles, therefore they had no such humiliation as *Paul*; Yet I cannot but think, that therefore their sorrows

rows are not revealed, the we might not stumble upon them, and tye up God to such and such dispensations, as if God could worke but one and the same way.

5. Besides, *There may be a cause in the temper and variety of dispositions, upon which God makes his speciall grace glorious.* God hath some that are tough pieces of knotty timber, these he bewes and cuts much before he makes them fit for his Sanctuary: Others of more genuine, and meek, and ingenuous tempers, would be chopt in pieces, if so much should be hewn off them. Some grounds need not such stubbing, and digging, and plowing, and harrowing, they will be fit to receive the seed without so much labour. 5.

6. *Some dispositions are not so fixt, as to settle long upon an object, as to be so deeply affected with it, as others are.* "*Moveable dispositions* (saith Doctor Sibbs) *are not* "*not long affected with any thing, and therefore* (saith he) "*one main use of crosses, is to take off the soule from that* "*it is so dangerously set upon, and fix our running spirits:* "Again (saith he) *the spirits may be sometimes weak, and* "*so wasted, that they would not be able to endure so strong* "*a conflict of grief as others that are of fresh, and strong,* "*& stout spirits.* And in such a case God hath promised not to fix his wrath upon the soul too heavily, *Isa.* 57.16. *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I bee always wroth, for the spirits should then fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Be comforted (Christian) when thou considerest the variety of Gods dispensations, though thou dost not find him acting in such a dispensation to thee, as possibly he hath done to others. It may be he hath not appointed thee for such an eminent service, he intends not perhaps to call thee to martyrdom; Possibly thou wert by nature of a dejected melancholy spirit, and more indisposed to pride, then others; Perhaps he had not suffered thee to run into such outragious 6.

wickednesses, as others did, for which they must pay more teares to his bottle? Possible thou wert not of so morose and rugged a temper, as others; that thou didst not need such stubbing and digging; not so knotty, that thou shouldst need so much cutting and hewing; though thou hadst as many bad humours as others, by nature, yet it may be that they were not so setled, and putrified by vitious custome; or if they were, yet be comforted in this, that God acts not with great sinners and perverse natures, and proud tempers, and eminent vessels, alike. Who art thou to track the Almighty? to limit the holy one of Israel? and if that Gods acts in such various dispensations, know that it is not in the power of man to set a measure.

3. Thirdly, *Consider the end of humiliation, and if the end be wrought, take no thought for the meanes.* The ends of humiliation are chiefly these two. First, *To make sin bitter to the soul, to bring the soul into a loathing and detestation of sin.* Secondly, *To make the soul in a capacity of acting Faith.*

1. 1. The First end, *is to bring the soul in a loathing and leaving of sin*; That *Ephraim* may speak two words, First, What have I done? Secondly, What have I to do with Idols? Consider, thou sayest, I have not been humbled enough, how shall we judge that? 1. Hath thy humiliation made thee to loath sin? That thou sayst as *Iob* 42.6. *I abhor my selfe, and repent:* Mark, the end of repentance is self-abhoring. Doest thou say with *David*? *Psal.* 119.163. *I abhor and hate lying, and every false way*, verse 104. *And I hate vain thoughts*, verse 119. *And I hate them that hate thee*, Psa. 139.21,22. This is enough, rest thy thoughts in it. *Heb.* 1.9. *Thou hast loved righteousnesse, and hated iniquity; therefore thy God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oyl of Gladnes above thy fellows.* That which was there spoken of God concerning Christ, is true of all his members; hath thy little humiliation

miliation (which thou thinkest is not enough) wrought thus in thee? that whereas thou wert art a drunkard, liar, swearer, unclean person, a vain proud person, a companion of fools, Now thou canst say, and say heartily, that thou hatest drunkennesse, swearing, lying, sabbath-breaking, vanity, formality, yea, and those that do these things? Why now thy humiliation hath wrought it's end. Why shouldst not thou love righteousnesse, rest upon Christ, apply the promises, &c. To say now, I cannot think I have ground to beleeve, is as much as if one should say, when he hath made use of a scaffold to build a great building, Alas! I cannot beleeve that I may lay the top-stone of my building; my scaffold is not high enough, or it is not strong enough; when it hath proved it selfe both high enough, and strong enough, in holding to accomplish the work. Doctor *Sibbs*, in answer to this question, when is Godly sorrow such as that the soul may stay it selfe with comfortable thoughts about its conditions, giveth these Rules.

Sibbs soul conflict, p. 379.

1. *When we find strength against that sin which we formerly fell into, and ability to walk in a contrary way.*

5 *Rules.*

2. *When that which is wanting in griefe, is made up in feare.*

3. *When after grief, we find inward peace.*

4. *When after it, we value the grace and mercy in Christ above al the contentments in the world.*

5. *When it springs from hatred, and works true hatred against all sin.*

First, Now (saith he) *true hatred is carried against all sin.*

Secondly, Especially, *against those sins which are most near. Sorrow for sin proceeds from the affection of the soul; Hatred from judgment, and we ought rather to rest in our hatred of sin, proceeding from our judgment, then in our sorrow for Sin proceeding from our passions:* Considering that the fountaine of passions is deeper in men of a melancholy,

lancholy, and reserved temper, then in others of a quick and chearly temper, and yet these may hate sin as well as the other.

2. The *second end of humiliation, is to make us in a capacity of receiving Christ.* Every soule is not in a capacity of receiving Jesus Christ, when the soule is willing, and desirous to receive Christ, then it is in a capacity of receiving him. And the soul cannot act Faith, by resting upon Christ, till it be made willing. Some will say, doth not Jesus Christ work this willingnesse? yes without question, *it is he that worketh both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure, Phil.* 2.14. But yet he first worketh to will, before he worketh to do, and before the soule is willing, it is not in a capacity of doing. *Rev.* 22.17. *Whosoever willeth, let him drink of the water of life freely*: First, will, then take, then drink, and yet it is free. *They shall indeed be willing in the day of his power, Psal.* 110.3. God draws the Well, but he makes us willing first, before he gives us power to receive, and apply Christ, which is the act of Faith. Now God useth means to worke this willingnesse, and that is humiliation. *Hos.* 5.15. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.* If thy humiliation hath wrought this effect in thy soul, that thou art now made willing to receive Christ Jesus, O beleeve, act thy Faith, let thy measure of humiliation never trouble thee, it hath wrought it's end.

2. 3. I might name a third end of humiliation, and *that is to inhance the price of Jesus Christ to the soule.* Christ would not be so sweet, if sin were not so bitter. Doest thou finde this end wrought? that now Christ is more precious to thee then thousands of Gold and silver, more sweet then thousands of lusts and corruptions? That thy heart now sayes, O that I had Christ, though I had nothing

thing in the world? that I had the bread of life to eate, and the water of life to drinke, though I begged my bread, and wanted water, all the daies of my life? O that I had the robes of his righteousnesse, to cloath my soul, though I went naked! O give me Christ, O give me Christ, above all, for all, instead of all, or else I die. Here now be comforted, the end is wrought again, and thou hast no ground not to beleeve, because thou art not enough humbled. The cause must not destroy the end; the end of humiliation, is as you have heard. What serves humiliation for, but to bring thee to it? if thou beest already by humiliation brought, that thou art grieved for sin past, that thou hatest sin present, that thou loathest the thoughts of embracing sin for the time to come, that thou art made willing to close with Jesus Christ, that thou prizest him above all the earths contentments whatsoever; thou hast no ground, nay, thou sinnest in letting thy Faith stumble upon this threshold.

4. Consider, that it is possible thou mayest misjudge thy selfe in this point of the measure of humiliation too: The fountain of humiliation is often so deep, that we can not fadom it; the Well may be deep, though we see but a little of it. First consider, that in thy humiliation, *you must measure length and breadth, and all.* Secondly, *Consider, thou must measure inside, as well as outside.* Thirdly, you must *remember it is not done, though it may be done enough for thee to apply a promise, and rest upon Jesus Christ, and receive, and apply him to thy soule.*

First, Many Christians mistake upon this principle. Why doest thou thinke thy humiliation is not enough? They will answer you, alas, I was never in such a depth of amasing sorrow, as *Paul* was, as I have heard such and such a Christian was; they were even in the jawes of Hell. My work was a slight work to theirs. Half so much

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much broad-cloath, of a great breadth, will make a suit as well, as so much again of some that is not halfe the breadth; the breadth makes amends for the length of the other. Others, God hath given them deep sorrow, but short, perhaps hee hath given thee long sorrow, but not so broad and deep: there may be as much water in a shallow pond, that is broad, as in a deep well that is straight. It may be thou hast been divers months, weeks, yeeres under thy sorrow, though it was not such an heart-rending sorrow, as others might be. They had sorrow that even rent their heart in pieces, but it lasted not so long as thine, before they had joy: God measured out their measure in depe, and thine in breadth.

2. Secondly, Consider, *if you will measure your humiliation right, you must measure both inside, and outside.* Possibly, you judge you are not humbled enough, because you have not shed so many teares as others have, you measure it only in the outside, alas, many tempers are not so disposed to teares as others. Suppose two men were wounded, the one bleeds nothing or little at all, the other bleeds that the blood staines all his apparell, runs down the streets; you see scarce a drop of blood come from the other, but the wound closeth; will you therefore say, that the one bleeds not so much as the other; nay, surely you will say, that he bleedes more desperately, he bleeds inwardly. The seat of humiliation is the heart, not the eye. Humiliation is not to be measured by wet handkerchiefs; the swolne face is not alwaies the outside of a most broken heart; possibly your heart weepes, your soule is ready to burst with groanings, but you want the vent of your eyes, they are tongue-tyed. The measure of your humiliation for all this may be greater then the other.

3. Thirdly, Possibly some may say, O but can I thinke that God requires no more teares? no more sadnesse? for those thousands of sinnes that I have in my life time com-

committed against him? *Consider therefore Christian, that your humiliation is not past, when you have apprehended and applyed Christ to your soules.* You must reserve some teares for the time to come, you have humiliation-work after Faith, *Zach.* 12. 10. Though the seven Devils be cast out, and *Mary* be set by Christ, yet she may wash his feet with her teares of her eyes, and wipe them with the haires of her head: She may come againe, and stand behind him weeping, you have to do to looke upon him whom you have pierced and mourne. As the man that takes Physicke, it workes before he takes his broth, but that sets it a working againe, and more; So though before you apply Jesus Christ there will be some humiliation, yet your receiving him and resting upon him by Faith, doth not stop up your fountaine of teares, you shall have a mourning time after that; save an handkerchiefe to wet then.

Fifthly, For thy comfort consider, that humiliation ought not to be, 1. A ground of Faith, 2. Is not a ground of acceptation. The First will depend upon the latter.

First, *Consider, thy humiliation is not a ground of thy acceptation*; Thou art not therefore accepted, because thou art thus and thus humbled. "If we watch not our "nature (saith reverend *Sibbs*) there will be a spice of "popery, which is a naturall religion, in this great de-"sire of more griefe, as if when wee had that, wee had "something to satisfie God withall, and so our minde "still runs too much upon works. If free-grace did not clarifie teares, and the greatest sorrow wee could have for sin, those bitter waters would bee more filthy then the puddles of the street. If the blood of free-grace doth not cement a broken heart and accept it, and merit for it, Hell is its desert and portion, for all any merit in it. It is a good piece of prayer. *Psal.* 20. 3. *The Lord accept thy sacrifice*, or [make fat thy sacri-

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fice] or [turne thy sacrifice into ashes] A broken, and a contrite heart is the Lords sacrifice, which he will never despise, *Psal* 51.17. But the Lord must, 1. *Turn it into ashes*, 2. *Make it fat*, 3. *Accept it*——And therefore this can bee no sufficient *remora* in thy way of Faith: For couldst thou make thy head a fountaine of water, and thine eyes rivers of teares, they should merit no salvation; heaven is not to bee bought with sighs, nor art thou therefore accepted, because thou art humbled, but even thy humiliation must have an acceptation, otherwise God should save us, not for his own sake, and for his Name sake, (as indeed he doth) but for our teares sake, for our humiliation sake, for our workes sake; for Christians must warily consider, that God doth not save his people and accept his Children for those workes, which his owne spirit worketh in them: This is a Doctrine of Popery, who to wash their hands of the Doctrine of merits, wherewith they are charged, tell us they hold no such matter, as that a Christian may be saved by his own workes, but God gives him grace to work good workes, and for them he accepts, for them he saves. We say no, for even the workes of Gods spirit of grace, acting in us, are our workes, and salvation is not of works, but of grace. And this Evangelicall lesson is hinted to us, even in the Ceremoniall Law; The Lord commands a yeerely day of atonement, *Levit* 16. for the sins of the holy place. To prove this, I might instance in all those Texts of Scripture, of which the Epistle to the *Romans*, and *Galatians*, are especially full, and so the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, which treat concerning the Doctrine of Justification, and clear it not to be of workes, neither internall nor externall, but of grace: But I will instance but in one, *Tit.* 3.5,6,7. *But after that the kindnesse* (saith he) *and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. Not by the workes of righteousnesse, which*

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wee have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, Mark ye, *by it*, not *for it*: Gods mercy and free grace is the ground of the soules acceptation, and therefore consider upon what principle thou runnest, that concludest, I have not yet been enough humbled, for to be accepted, as if thy humiliation were the reason and ground of Gods acceptation. Indeed we ought never to think that we are enough humbled, and yet we ought alwaies to thinke that humiliation too much, and that sense of our sinnes too much, which hinders Faith, for it destroyes its end. Therefore why art thou thus humbled (Christian) with this conceit, that your faith is no Faith, because before it, you wept not just so many teares? It is Faiths work to believe and apprehend the soules acceptation before God. Now Gods acceptation, as you have heard, is never for the soules humiliation; and therefore, what should hinder thy Faith working, in apprehending thy acceptation before God, because thou art not accepted for this worke any more then any other——Nay,

Secondly, *Thy humiliation is not a ground of Faith*: 2.
Thou dost not therefore apply Christ, because thou art so and so humbled. Put case, that a great Prince should be willing to bestow his sonne in marisge upon a poore peasant; onely (saith he) I will make this term or condition, that when you come to marry him, you shall come in sackcloth, to shew what yee are, he shall give you a better garment afterwards; will any one say, that this maids coming to the marriage arraied in sackcloth, is a ground of her so rich marriage? or will any say it is a meritorious condition, that she deserveth such a match, to come so attired? Surely no, the ground of all is the Princes delight in her; this is the ground of his taking her to wife, and yet the King commanded that attire. So the Lord saith, Poor, vile wretch! I

will give thee my Christ in marriage, but thou shalt come weeping, to shake hands with him weeping for thy sins; he shall afterwards take off thy sackcloth-garments. Can any say, that this is either a meritorious condition, or a ground of acceptation? Consider (Christian) wert thou never so much humbled, thou couldst not say, I will therefore beleeve because I am humbled. Humiliation is a necessary antecedent to Faith, but no ground of Faith. Let not that therefore be a stumbling block to thee, which cannot be a pillar and foundation to thee; if thy faith cannot stand upon it, let it never stumble upon it.

And thus I have done with the second thing I propounded, which was, to propound such considerations to such soules, as were under this temptation, as might comfort their hearts, and strengthen and stablish them: Only, I beseech you remember to whom I have been speaking all this while; not to hard-harted stony souls, but to broken and humbled souls; not to those that regard not to get their soules humbled at all, but to those that are humbled, that they can be humbled no more, and that groan under the hardnesse of their own hearts; not to those that presume to apply their hot boyling lusts and corruptions, to the blood and wounds of Jesus Christ, flattering themselves with a notion of Faith, and conceiting they doe beleeve; but to those that are humbled, though they cannot have a good thought of themselves.

I would not be misunderstood, to have broken one word to slight the work of humiliation, or to cherish that licentious novell Doctrine, that there is no need at all of it, and a Christian shall not need regard it; but what I have spoken, hath not been for dead men, (what should they do with Cordials?) but for dying, fainting, swooning Christians; not for them that consider their sins too little, but for them that so dim their eyes with

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Poring on them, that they cannot see the absolute covenant of God, and the free-grace of Christ, and lay hold upon the promises of life. There is an extream on either side; the sober Christian avoids either, and keeps the mean. So I have done with the second thing I propounded, *viz.* to propound some considerations, which might comfort the afflicted soul under this affliction, and strengthen it to resist this temptation. For without question, as the Devill hath a designe upon many a soul, to run it upon a rock of presumption, and carry it on in a blind notion of Faith; so he hath a designe upon some souls, to wrack them upon the sands, and sink them in a pit of despair. The Devils devouring voice to soules, is either; here is no need of humiliation, or, there is no humiliation enough. I come now to the last thing which I propounded, which is, to give some directions to such souls as are burthened with this affliction, and groan under this temptation, how to demean themselves and what to do. I will reduce all that I shall speak, by way of direction, to these heads.

First, Eye the nature of the covenant, and grace, and promises of God more. Secondly, Eye the nature and cause of humiliation more. Thirdly, Labour to get thy heart more humbled.

First of all, *Eye the nature of God, declared in the free dealings out of his grace to thee. This I shall enlarge in* three instances.

1. *Eye Gods covenant, and the nature of that.*
2. *Eye Christs grace, and the nature of that.*
3. *Eye the Promises and the nature of them.*

First, *Eye the nature of God in his covenant more.* The cause of this affliction is Christians too much eying, and poring upon their sins, and themselves; the penitent beleever ought to have two eyes, one to look downward, another to look upward. This is that which *David* comforted himselfe with, when he considered his

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own unworthiness, and the unworthiness of his house, 2 *Sam.* 23. 5. *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure, for this is my salvation, all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.* *David*, though a man according to Gods owne heart, yet had a wicked house, *Absalom* had slain his brother, rebelled against his Father, lay with his Fathers concubines; *Amnon* had deflowred his sister, &c. Now *David* looking upon his personall unworthiness, both of his own person, and of his children, was humbled for it, and in sadnesse of heart saith, *although my house be not so ordered with God, &c.* not so ordered as it should be, not ordered according to the mercies that I have received from God: Yet see how he casts up another eye, and views the covenant of God; yet, saith he, The Lord hath made with me an, 1. *Everlasting covenant*, 2. *Ordered*, and 3. *Sure, for this is my salvation, &c.* Christian do thou the like; thou poreſt upon thy selfe, and readest a great deal of personall unworthinesse, seest thousands of sins, the least of which might damn thee and damn a world, seest much mercy bestowed upon thee by God, and all mercies abused by thee, to the dishonour of God; yet comfort thy selfe by eying Gods covenant; and say, Although my heart, although my life, be not so ordered with God, although my soul be not so humbled before God, yet the Lord hath made with me an everlasting covenant, and a sure covenant; the covenant of peace and grace with my soule was from eternity, and therefore free and without cause in the creature. I had neither an hard heart, nor a soft heart, when God made that covenant with me, and it is a sure covenant; as God never made a covenant with me for the softnesse and tendernesse of my heart, so neither will he cast me off, for the hardnesse of my heart, and it is a covenant ordered

dered in all things. He hath made a covenant with me, as to give me salvation, so to give me such an heart as he requires of me, in order unto my salvation; and for this is my salvation. I shall not be saved for the worthinesse of my house, nor for the worthiness of my person, nor for the tenderneſſe of my heart, but because he hath made a covenant with me: Here is the groundwork, here is the cause my of salvation.

Thus Christian, eye 1. *The eternity of the covenant.* 2. *The sureness of the covenant.* 3. *The freeness of the covenant.* 4. *The particularity of the covenant.* God hath not made his eternall covenant at random, with those soules that shall be broken-hearted, and shall beleeve: No (saith *David*) *he hath made with me a sure, well-ordered, everlasting covenant*; the other is *Arminian* and licentious Doctrine. God hath made a covenant with thee, and an everlasting covenant with thee, and a sure covenant with thee; eye this and say, Wel, though my heart be not so humbled before God as it ought to be, though my soul be not so broken, though my whole man be not so ordered, yet God hath made with me in particular, an everlasting covenant, sure, wel-ordered, and for this is my salvation.

Secondly, *Eye the nature of God and Jesus Christ, in the dispensations of his grace more.* The truth of it is, the covenant, the eternall covenant that God hath made with sinners, is but a declaration of his grace; but, I conceive, there is a difference between Gods declarations of his grace, and his dispensations of his grace; though that every dispensation of grace be a declaration of his grace, yet every declaration of his grace, is not a dispensation: Declarations of Grace may be generall, Dispensations of grace are particular. God declared his grace and love to mankinde, when hee made that promise, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpents head*: But now he made a dispensation of his

grace, when he gives a gracious ſoule power to draw out it's part in this promiſe. Now doeſt thou ſit troubled, that thy ſoule is not thus and thus humbled, not enough brought low, &c eye the diſpenſations, the particular diſpenſations of Gods grace. *Conſider to whom God hath made diſpenſations of his grace.* 1. *In what manner God hath diſpenſed (and revealed the diſpenſations of) his grace.* Sit down and thinke of the Saints of God, that God hath dealt out his ſaving grace to, and thou ſhall finde them the moſt worthleſs and vile wretches. To *Paul* the perſecuter, the blaſphemer, ſo hard-hearted, that he could ſpill the blood of the tender-hearted Saints of God; yet this *Paul* the Lord humbled, and dealt out his grace to: To *Manaſſes*, ſo hard-hearted that he filled the land with innocent blood, that nothing would humble but a gaole and ſhackles and fetters, yet this *Manaſſes* taſted of the divine diſpenſations of grace. 2. *Conſider in what manner God hath diſpenſed his grace, and revealed the diſpenſations of his grace to theſe poor creatures.* Indeed I am apt to beleeve, that of all thoſe Saints in Scripture, not one ſaw Chriſt without a weeping eye, and a mourning heart; but yet this is certain, that God hath not in his word ſet out to us the like humiliaton of *Lydia* as of *Paul*, and of the Gaoler: Though I am of M. *Shepheards* minde, that *Lydia* was humbled as well as *Paul*; yet I conceive there are two things that we may gather for a ſouls comfort, from the holy Ghoſts ſo variouſly ſetting down Gods dealings with thoſe ſouls whom he hath brought home to himſelf; ſo fully and deeply expreſſing the ſorrows of ſome, as of *Paul* and *Manaſſes*, and the Goaler, and ſo tacitely concealing the ſorrows of others, as of *Lydia*, or ſo moderately revealing of them; as concerning thoſe converted at Saint *Peters* Sermon, concerning whoſe humiliation we have onely this upon record, that *they were prickt at the heart*. I ſay, I conceive there are two things that

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that we may gather from it, for a ſouls comfort under this affliction.

Firſt, *That Gods dealing in this particular, are not alike with every ſoul that he humbleth, ſome more & deeplier, ſome leſſe for his own end:* Which is hinted you before. 1.

Secondly, I conceive we may gather this from that various dealing of the holy Ghoſt in the word of God, in expreſſing Gods way with his people, *viz. That it is Gods will that ſouls ſhould not ſtumble upon this rock, and ſtick here; we are not yet enough humbled, not thus and thus humbled*; we ought to look for ſome, but not to ſtick at the want of the ſame meaſure of humiliation, which ſome of the Saints of God have had. Conſider theſe things Chriſtan! weigh the reaſon of Gods ſo various dealing with his converts, and various expreſſions (of his dealing with them) in his revealed word, and let this comfort and direct thee and raiſe thee up: ſay with thine own heart, My ſoul! why ſhould theſe thoughts hinder thee from going on? Gods dealings with all his converts, is not alike; and God would have in the ſame even manner, ſurely have revealed the ſorrows and humiliations of all his children, as of any, if he would have had me ſtumbled at this, and made this a block in my way to him. 2.

Thirdly, *Eye the nature of Gods promiſes.* Mark how the promiſes run, whether abſolutely or conditionally; and if conditionally, whether upon this condition, that the ſoul ſhould be thus and thus deeply humbled. O (ſaith a gracious ſoul) do you ſet me to eye them? they undo and ruin me, I finde the promiſes of Gods giving Chriſt to my ſoul, run all upon conditions of hungring and thirſting, *Iſai.* 55.1,2,3. Of being weary and heavy laden, *Mat.* 11.29. Of being loſt and undone, and this is that which I ſtick upon. I will anſwer thee in this particular. 3.

First, *'Tis true, such is the tenor of the promises, they do require hunger and thirsting, &c.* Though not as meritorious conditions; yet consider, *That they require no more then God hath promised to give.* See this *Zach.* 12. 10. *Ezek.* 11. 19, 20. & 36, 26, 27. Where God hath promised to give that same tender, broken, contrite heart, which other promises require the soule to have, that doth apply them to it self.

2. Secondly, *Consider, that those promises that seeme to require humiliation and brokennesse of heart, as conditions or qualifications (call them what you will) do no where require such and such a measure:* they require *rem*, but not *mensuram.*

3. Lastly, *And for thy great comfort consider, that those originall promises, in which God hath promised to give that tenderneſſe and brokenneſſe of heart; which hee seemeth to require in other promises, as a condition and qualification* for the soule, to whom of due it belongs to apply those promises: I say, those promises are absolute: for this take but two instances, *Ezek* 11. 19. 20. & 36. 26, 27. which are much the same. "*And I will give* "*them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you,* "*and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will* "*give them an heart of flesh, that they may walke in my* "*statutes, &c.* First he saies, they cannot walk in my statutes, and keepe my ordinances, untill their stony 2. heart bee gone, and they have an heart of flesh: Se- 3. condly, They cannot have this heart of flesh till I give it them; And thirdly, I will give it them. Now sit down and eye the promises, say thus: It is true, God doth require an heart of flesh, before I can apply the promises of pardon to me, but the same God hath promised to give it me; and there must, there can nothing bee done of me, in relation to that first gift God hath freely promised, to prepare me to apply his salvation, and to walk in his statutes, by taking away my heart of stone, and giving

ving me an heart of flesh, and believe, but this, that God will fulfill this free and absolute promise to thee. It is thy duty not only to believe that God will pardon thee but also to beleeve that God will humble thee; and not to stick upon, I am not humbled enough to apply the promise, but to say, I will labour to apply the promise of salvation, and to beleeve that God will humble mee more, and make good (amongst others) that promises to my soule, that he hath make to his people, that hee will take away their heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh, &c.

And thus I have done with the first direction to the afflicted soul. Eye the nature of God more in his covenant: Secondly, in the dispensation of his grace: Thirdly, in his promises. I come now to my second direction, and that is,

Secondly, *Consider the nature of humiliation: and* 2.
this thou mayest consider: First, in its originall: Secondly, in the manner of the operation of it: Thirdly, in its end. The two latter I have handled at large, in my considerations I propounded to comfort the soule in its affliction; I will but name them. First, Think that thy humiliation may be as great as it should be, though not so deep as others have been, it may bee it hath been longer. Secondly, It may have a more inward work. Thirdly, its working is not done, it will have a worke as long as thou liveſt. 2. Consider the nature of it, in its end: First, Meditate that the end of thy humiliation, is but to bring thee to loath sinne: Secondly, Leave sinne; and Thirdly, to make thee prize Christ. If this be done, it hath done its worke. But this I enlarged my selfe upon before. 3. (which should have been indeed first) *Consider the nature of humiliation in its originall, and efficient cause*, which is God, *Zach.* 12. 10. *Ezek.* 11. 19. 20. and sit down now and say, Certainly, God hath a good work begun in my soule, otherwise,

why ſhould ſin trouble me at all? or why ſhould I be troubled, that I am not troubled for my ſinne? and now how unreaſonable a thing is it for me, to ſtart from applying the promiſes, becauſe in my conceit, I am not enough humbled? It is God that hath humbled me at all, and it is he that muſt perfect the work in my ſoul; and ſurely, if he ſees it is not enough, he will work more, and he muſt do it if he will have it, for I am not able to humble my ſoule. Thus farre my direction hath reached to help thee to eaſe thy ſelfe, and direct thee what to do in point of meditation, and conſideration. My third reacheth thy practice.

3. Laſtly, *Labour after more and more humiliation.* Neither keep thy heart from beleeving, in infidelity out of a conceit of the want of it, nor yet ſlight and neglect it: Both theſe rocks muſt be avoided, as pernicious rockes for poor ſouls, & between which there is a ſafe paſſage. Let the world think what they will, and opinioniſts cry down that great worke: *Want of humiliation,* ſaith Maſter *Shepherd, is the cauſe of ſo much counterfeit coin, as is in the world; and againe (hee ſaith) we ſhall obſerve if there be little humiliation, there is little of Chriſt; if much of humiliation, much of Chriſt; if inconſtant humiliation, inconſtant fruition of Chriſt; if reall humiliation, reall poſſeſſion of Chriſt; if falſe humiliation, imaginary fruition of Chriſt.* Therefore, though I would not have thee ſo weep, but thou ſhouldeſt have a ſpare eye to look up to the free grace of Chriſt, yet I would not have thee ſo much fix thy eye upon the mercy, and free grace of Chriſt, that thou ſhouldeſt have never an eie to weepe for thy ſins. Humiliation and Faith are two things, that are conſiſtent togather; That's the laſt direction.

Sound Beleever. p. 14. ib. p. 146.

Labour to get thy ſoule more humbled. I know thou wilt ſay, how ſhal I doe that? truly I might give infinite directions, but this is ſo ordinary a point, in which ſo ma-

many pious men have laboured, that I shall but name to you some directions that they point out, as helps to the soule in this work. *Master Shepheard* gives these helps. Ib. p. 150

1. *Remember whose thou art*, Rom. 9. 20.
2. *Remember what thou art, a vile wretch*, Job 40. 3, 4
3. *Remember what thou hast been, and how long thou hast been so, and why should God choose thee.*
4. *Remember what thou wilt be*, Isa. 64. 6. good for nothing in his service, &c.

Doctor *Preston* gives these directions, *vol.* 4.

1. *Labour to see the greatnesse of thy sin.*
2. *To see the inability to help thy selfe.*

For the first he propounds this.

1. *Fix your thoughts upon some great sin.*
2. *Think of the number of thy sins.*
3. *Make past sins present, think of youth-sins, &c.*
4. *Be not willing to extenuate, or excuse any sin.*
5. *Make sorrow abide upon your hearts.*

2. Consider the inability to help thy selfe.

1. *Think of Gods greatness and strictness.*
2. *Of thy weakness and sinfulness.*

And in another place he gives these directions.

1. *Every day search thy heart, for the sinnes thou hast committed that day.*
2. *Study the Scriptures, they will discover your vile hearts more to you.*
3. *Keep your hearts and waies upright, that is the way to keep them from hardning.*
4. *Be diligent in your calling.*
5. *Remember times and sins past.*
6. *Distinguish betwixt grace in thee and thy selfe, of thy self.*

Many other directions have been and may be given, I will reduce all to these two or three heads.

1. *Consider the nature of thy sin.*

2. *Con-*

2. *Consider the mercy of thy God.*
3. *Run unto God.*

Now these may be branched out into severall particulars.

1. *Consider sins in the filthinesse of them.*
2. *In the greatnesse of them.*
3. *In the multitude of them.*
4. *In the aggravations of them.*
5. *In the effects of them.*
6. *In the dangerous consequence and guilt of them.*

Consider the mercy of God.

1. *That hath spared thee from hell so long.*
2. *That yet will pardon thee.*
3. *That yet will give thee heaven and glory.*

3. But, when thou hast done all what thou canst this way, these are but poor helps; the surest way is, to *Fly to God by prayer*, and intreat him to work his own worke. So the Church, *Hos.* 14.2. Here thou mayst plead with God: First, *his promises*, Zach. 12.10. *Ezek.* 11.19, 20 Secondly, *Thine own inability*, to do any thing towards this worke, though thou hast tried much; and after all this, rest upon God for his own work doing, and labour to frame thy heart to beleeve, hee will fulfill his promises, and humble thee, *that thou mayest walk in his statutes, and apply his promises to thee for thy salvation.* This is my advice to thee, and the Lord give his blessing to it. And thus I have laboured to sift the first Objection of the soule, why it cannot beleeve; or the first mistake of the soule, grounded upon the souls too much eying preparatory qualifications.

SERM.

SERM. III.

ISAIAH 1. 18.

Though your sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.

I Have already shewed you, that one great cause, Why many poor doubting souls, are afraid to lay any comfortable hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ tendered in the Gospel-promises, is their mistake in the grounds of faith, and so they may mistake.

By judging their preparatory humiliation a ground of beleeving, and such a measure too of that, as they fancy necessary, or have found others of Gods Saints humbled with, and this mistake I have laboured to cleer. 1.

Secondly, We are too apt to mistake the ground of faith to be our own worthinesse and cleannesse: and hence you shall have such Christians cry out, *Alas Sir! Would you have us lay hold on Jesus Christ? what* 2.

Complaint.

we that have so defiled our hands with sin, that have been such swearers, such drunkards, such profane wretches, such gospel despisers, such mockers of God, and the people of God? can we have any warrant to beleeve? what ground can we have, when we have given our youth to the devil, to think that Jesus Christ will take the fag end of our life? No, no, blessed are they that are yet young, and have not run into such sins as we have done; call to them to beleeve, even those that have lived honestly & civilly. Christ surely wil have nothing to do with such profane ones as we are.

This whole complaint now is bottomed in a mistake of the ground of faith, upon a conceit that it should be some cleanness and righteousness in our selves; but sinner! I tell thee, there is warrant enough for thee, if the Lord hath smitten thy heart for thy sins, to beleeve in the Lord Jesus Christ: My text is warrant enough; for this is that which the Lord hath said, *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*: this is that which Christ hath said, *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, yea, and *publicanes and harlots shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, when the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out.*

It was to such a one as thou spakest thy selfe to be, that Saint *Paul* said, *Acts* 16. 31. *Beleeve on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, both thou and thy house.* *Brentius* hath an excellent passage in his homily on that text; (saith he) what is that you say *Paul* and *Silas*? Is the way to salvation so

Quid dicitis Paule & Silas? unum tam facilis est via ad salutem? num is qui multis annis ab adolescentia sua idola coluerat, horrenda flagitia, qualia solent Ethnici, perpetraverat, & paulò ante vos innocentes ac sanctos viros in carcerem crudeliter conjecerat, & pedes vestros quas Prophetа speciosos, utpote eorum qui annunciant pacem, vocavit, ligno strinxit, tam facile veniam suorum peccatorum consequetur, ut si saltem credat, salutem habebit? Cur non jubetis eum omnibus diebus vitæ pane & aqua jejunare, non nisi vestimentis lineis sese vestire, super spinas ambulare, ad templum Hierosolymitanum pijs calceamentis impositis peregrinari, & alia id genus opera facere, ut his peccata sua expiet, & pro illis satisfaciat sive mavis satis patiatur? At vero Paulus & Silas Apostoli non Antichristi sunt. Brentius in Acta Apo. Homil. 76.

easie, can this poor wretched jaylor that for so many years even from his youth hath bin a worshipper of idols and a committer of all heathenish abominations, he that so lately cruelly handled you the holy, and innocent Saints of God; and set those feet in the stocks, which the Prophet calls blessed for bringing the glad tidings of peace, can this profane wretch so easily obtain salvation, that he needs do nothing but beleeve? surely you are mistaken: why doe not you bid him fast all his life time, and feed himself with bread and water; and clothe himself with nothing but sackcloth, or walk upon thorns, or take a pilgrimage, as good as bare-foot to Hierusalem, and do such works of repentance that he might expiate for his sins, or satisfie, or, if you will, *satis-* suffer for his sins? But (saith he) *Paul* and *Silas* were the Apostles of Christ, and not of *Anti-Christ:* it is the Doctrine of Anti-christ that we can satisfie for our sins, and merit our own heaven; the Doctrine of Christ is that he alone must satisfie, and we beleeve, &c.

So I say to that Christian, though thou hast been such a sinner, yet it should be no barr to thy faith, and to this end I shall propound severall considerations to thee.

Chap. 3.

How to satisfie a poor soul doubting whether it may beleeve or no, because of it's many and great sins past, or it's continuing corruptions, and so deemeth it self unworthy.

FIrst of all consider, *Gods grace is enough for thee*, This scruple of thy spirit, ariseth from scant, and streightned thoughts of rich incomprehensible grace: Be con-

vinced therefore, that there is a fulneſſe enough in the ocean of infinite grace to ſwallow up thy ſoule, however loaded with a burthen of ſin; obſerve but how the Scripture ſetteth out infinite love: take one place for all, Eph. 3.17,18,19. *That Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by Faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the bredth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, that you might be filled with the fulneſſe of God.* Mark how the Apoſtle expreſſeth free grace, by all dimenſions; are thy ſins in the height? there is an height of love; are they in the depth? there is a depth of love; are they long, broad? are they all? yet there is mercy enough in this Chriſt, for ſuch is his love that it paſſeth knowledge; are they a Mountaine? *why who art thou O great Mountaine before Zerubbabel? thou ſhalt be made a plaine*; doe thy ſinnes cry up to Heaven? *his mercies are above the heavens*; are thy ſins more in number then the haires of thy head? his mercies are more in number then the ſand which lyeth on the ſea ſhore. Now this is eaſie to bee conceived, if we do but conceive, and know that the mercies of God are infinite; God is an infinite God, and every mercy of his, is as inconceivable as himſelfe is. His love *paſſeth all underſtanding* (ſaith the Apoſtle;) have no low thoughts (Chriſtian) of the height of free grace which reacheth up to the Heavens, yea, and above the heavens; Is the filthy garments of thy wickedneſſe of a larger extent thinkeſt thou, then the long white robe of his righteouſneſſe, *who was made for thee righteouſneſſe, wiſdome, ſanctification, and redemption? Is the fountaine ſet open for Judah, and Jeruſalem, for ſin, and for uncleanneſſe, ſo ſhallow that thou canſt not bath in it?* Miſtake not (Chriſtian) it is a bath of capacity to hold all filthy ſouls, be their uncleanneſſe what it will, if they will but come and waſh, and bee clean;

clean; those that have the rottennest wounds, the filthiest sores, the most unsound carkasses may fetch balm from Gilead enough to heale their wounds. When Christ was upon earth, the Evangelist tels us, *Mat.* 4.24. *They brought unto him all sick people that were sicke of divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with Devils, and he healed them.* When vertue went out from Christ, to heale the poore woman that touched the hemme of his garment, it went out of him as light goeth out of the sun, that there is no lesse for what goeth out. Christ never had any vertue went out of him, so as by such emission he lost any. How many Saints think you, since old *Abraham* (who was the father of the faithfull) to this day, have touched the hemme of his garment? vertue went out and healed every one, and yet his garments are all oily with mercy and grace still. How many drops of blood have thirsty Saints had from *Davids* time to this houre, and yet the fountain of cleansing blood, hath not a drop lesse in it? Grace in Christ is like the heat of the fire, or light of the sun, take how much you will of either, you shall not rob either: narrow not the breadth of incomprehensible love; when thou hast measured for believers ten thousand yards, there shall not be a naile lesse on the piece of free-grace. The sea, though a thing infinite, will hardly be measured out by quils, much lesse shall the unfadomable ocean of infinite love, be measured by drops for the washing poore souls from the staines and filth of their sins. The boy could tell the father, hee would have done emptying the sea into an hole with a spoon, before he should have opened the Doctrine of the Trinity: And sooner shalt thou get all the light out of the body of the sunne, and heat out of the fire, then put Jesus Christ to pant for his breath of free-grace. Oh, that sinners had but as willing legs as he hath capacious armes; we see hands are washed every day, and have

been these thousand of yeares, now how long can wee think it would yet be, should we get the dirtiest hands we could make, before all the seas, rivers, fountaines, and streames in the world, would be exhausted; yea, though they should wash seven times a day: infinitely sooner (Christian) then the fountaine of free-grace shall be exhausted, with all the buckets that come to draw the water of life from it. Seest thou a steeple, as *Pauls* in *London*, or the like, of a very great height? seest thou the highest mountaine that seems to have married the clouds, and sit in their lap? Suppose now that mountaine or steeple in the deepest place of the ocean, how much wouldest thou see on it? nay, were another on the top on that, there would not be a spire of grosse, nor a grain of dust discernable: were thy mountain of sinnes, that with their height seeme not to threaten the clouds at all, but God himselfe, were I say, that, yea and another, and a third thousands of them piled up and thrown into the ocean of infinite love, the bottomlesse depth of his meritorious blood, the waters of free grace would still be as much higher, as the heavens are higher then the earth, yea, infinitely heigher then the highest planet is above the lowest spring. *O the depth!* Suppose thou sawest the highest *Cedar* in *Lebanon*, the highest *Pyramide* upon the earth; Make thy selfe a ladder of ten thousand staves if thou canst, and rear it up, how much higher would the sunne bee thinkest thou? infinite higher are the mercies of thy Saviour, Christian, above the height of thy transgressions. *There is mercy enough*, thats the first ——But this is easie enough to be evinced, a Christian will tell you he cannot, dare not, doth not doubt this, he doubteth not of the power, but of the will of God.

2. Secondly, Consider therefore, *That there is will enough in the God of mercies, as well as power enough to save thee, if thou wilt but believe in him.* It is a note of pious

pious Maſter *Rutherford*, *That none can doubt, or ſay they doubt of Gods will, but they muſt really doubt of Gods power*; for if thou beleeveſt his power, thou muſt at the ſame time beleeve his will; But for this it is eaſie enough to evince the good will of God, to ſave the greateſt of ſinners. It is very obſervable, that when the Apoſtle ſpeaks of Gods acts of grace, he confirmeth his good will by an argument drawn from his power: ſo he concludes that the Jewes ſhall be graffed in, becauſe he is able to graffe them in, *Rom.* 11.23. and that the weak in Faith ſhall be holden up, becauſe he is able to hold them up, *Rom.* 14.4. intimating, that as to God acts of grace, we need not doubt of the Lords good will, be wee be confirmed in Faith concerning his power, and have a promiſe. Where ſhall we finde his will but in his Word? and how ſhall we judge of it but by his acts? It is a knowne and certaine rule, *That the Goſpel ſhuts none out of Heaven, but thoſe that by unbeleefe locke the gate againſt themſelves*; Enquire but into Gods promiſes, is there the leaſt parentheſis of any exception in all the pages of free grace? *Iſa.* 1.18 *Come now (ſaith God)* Let us reaſon together, *Though your ſinnes bee as ſcarlet, I will make them as ſnow? though they be red like cirmſon, they ſhall be white as wool.* There is no ſinners ſin that is dyed in graine, but ſuch as have ſinned the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt; Haſt thou been a murtherer? thy ſinne is yet but a ſcarlet die, I will make it as ſnow (ſaith God;) haſt thou been a blaſphemer? *All ſin and blaſpemy ſhall bee forgiven* (ſaith Chriſt) *Mat.* 12.31. haſt thou been an Idolater? an uncleane wretch? *I will ſprinkle clean water upon you (ſaith God) and you ſhall be clean from all your filthineſſe, and from all your Idols will I cleanſe you*, Ezc.36.25. What? haſt thou abuſed Chriſt, and ſpoken againſt him, who is thy only ſalvation? *Whoſoever* (ſaith Chriſt) *ſpeaketh a word againſt the Sonne of man, it ſhall be forgiven him*, *Mat.* 12.32.

Rut. *Trial of Faith*, p 128.

Harke

Harke (Christian) is there not as much infiniteneſſe in thy Christs will (thinkeſt thou) as in his power?

2. Secondly, Nay, conſider, *his will is not only ful enough of power, but there is an earneſtneſs of deſire in his will to ſave the greateſt ſinners, that leaving their ſins, will turne to him*; this will be eaſily enough evinced from his expreſſions and actions, tending to that end; *He ſpeakes, he ſweares, he pleades, he expoſtulates. he weeps, he invites, he comes, he dies.*

1. 1. *He ſpeakes*, that you have heard, hee ſaith, I will ſave ſcarlet, crimſon, ſinners; I will ſay to them that are in their blood, *live, I will powre out water upon the unclean.*

2. 2, *He ſweares.* and hath bid us to tell you his oath *Ezek.* 33.61. ſay unto them, *As I live* (ſaith the Lord) *I deſire not the death of a ſinner, but had rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſſe and live.* Lo, hee could ſwear by no greater, he ſweares by himſelfe. *O happy creatures* ſaith (*Tertullian*) for whom God is pleaſed to put *himſelfe to his oath! O unbeleeving wretches, if we will not truſt our God ſwearing! Yet further,*

O fœlices nos quorum cauſa Deus jurat! O infideles ſi juranti non credamus! Tertul.

3. 3. *He pleads, Turn yee, turn ye from your evill waies, why will ye die O ye houſe of Iſrael?* Micah 6. 3. *O my people! what have I done to thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? teſtifie againſt me. He expoſtulates,* Iſai. 5.4. *What could I have done more for my vineyard then I have done? Wherefore when I looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

4. 4. He appeales to the mountains and foundations of the earth, *Mic.*6 1,2,3. to the ſinners themſelves, *Iſa.* 5.3,4. *judg now O yee inhabitants of Judah and Jeruſalem.*

5. 5. He wiſhes groaning, *Deu.* 5.29. *O that there were ſuch an heart in them that they would feare me, and keepe all my commandements alwaies, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever.* And again, *Deu.* 32.29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, and would consider their latter end.

6. *He professeth hee knoweth not how to destroy them,* Hosea 11.8. *How shall I give thee up* Ephraim? *How shall I deliver thee O Israel? How shall I make thee as* Admah? *How shall I set thee as* Zeboim? *my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* 6. Hos. 11.8.

7. He weepes when hee comes nigh Jerusalem, he wept over it and said, *O Jerusalem Jerusalem——how oft would I have gathered thee, as an hen gathereth her chickins under her wings, but thou wouldst not?* Mat. 23. 37,38. Christ would, but the sinner would not. 7. Mat. 23. 37,38

8. He invites, *Isa. 55. 1, 2, 3. Ho, every one that thirsteth come yee to the waters, & he that hath no mony come, yea buy and eat without mony, and without price*; and againe, ver. 3. *Incline your ear and come unto me, and your soule shall live*; Hark how he calls, *Mat. 11. 29. Come unto me all yee that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will ease you.* The Father saith *come*, the Son saith *come*, the Spirit saith *come*, you that are in the hedges *come*, he sends out his servants to highway-people, *Mat. 22. 9.* To as many as are found there; why stay you disputing his will, when he so often saith *come, come?* Rev. 22. 17. *The Spirit and the bride say come*, and *let him that heareth say come*, and *let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely.* Is not all this enough to let thee know God is willing, and Christ is willing to receive thee? Lo, *Christ will come to thee.* 8. Isa. 55. 1, 2, 3. Mat. 11. 29. Mat. 22 9. Rev. 22. 17.

9. See that essence of glory, bowing the Heavens and coming downe, laying aside his robes of Majesty, & putting on thy filthy garments, see him tiring himself in going about from place to place upon no other errand then this, to cry at the markets, *Oh, if any sinners love life, happinesse, if any will goe to heaven, let them come to me, I will shew them the way to my fathers bosome, and* 9.

endevor them to my fathers heart. Read his Sermons, observe his paines, thou wilt find a willing Saviour, not excepting publicans, and harlots from the Kingdome of God.

10. 10. Wouldst thou have more tokens of his will yet? Mat 21.37. *See him dying, hanging upon the Crosse, dropping out his last blood, breathing out his last breath,* stretching out his dying arms to encircle sinners should run in to him, breathing out the breath of free grace in his very last act upon a theefe that had not an hour to live; Who shall despaire? who shall say Christ is not willing to save him, and not blaspheme eternall love? speake truth! corrupt heart say thou art not willing to be saved.

11. 11. Is not this yet enough? *Observe him setting Ministers in his Church, lest thou shouldst not read, and none should tell thee the truth of his eternall love,* to speak out his good will in thine ears: All our errand is nothing but this, *sinners, Christ is willing to save you, And as Embassadours for Christ as, though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead be yee reconciled to* 2 Cor.5.20 *God.* 2 *Cor.*5.20. Why canst not thou beleeve his will? Consider in thy Saviours will, there is not onely a latitude for, but an eagernesse of thy eternall salvation: Why therefore doest thou say, my sins are so great that God will not pardon me? Beleeve, O blaspheme not the God of infinite good-will.

3. But thirdly, Consider: *That Gods eye of free-grace hath looked favourably upon, and Christs blood hath washed as filthy and polluted creatures, as thou art or canst* Esa.41.19. *be.* Christ hath planted in the wilderneſſe, *The shittah tree, the mirtle and the oil-tree, and hath set in the desert the fir-tree, and the box, and the pine tree;* He hath Esa.51.13. made as bad crab-stocks, as thy soule is, bring forth pleasant and delicious fruits. It is a note of Master *Rutherfords, that the dew of grace, hath ordinarily fain upon*

the

the moſt graceleſſe ſoules. Poſſibly thou mayeſt ſee and finde preſidents of actuall ſinners, borne as black as the *Ethiopian*, and that have made it their work to fully themſelves with the ſoot of ſins, as much as thou haſt, and that have dryed in ſin with as long cuſtomary continuance, as thou haſt done; yet Chriſt took them and waſhed them milke-white; haſt thou been an idolater? a perſecutor? ſo was *Manaſſes*; haſt thou been unclean? ſo was *David*; haſt thou crucified Chriſt? ſo had they that were converted at *Peters* Sermon; haſt thou denyed Chriſt? ſo did *Peter* himſelfe; haſt thou been a blaſphemer? ſo was *Paul*, yea, the chiefeſt of ſinners, yet received to mercy; haſt thou had ſeven devils? ſo had *Mary Magdalen*, yet purged and diſpoſſeſt; haſt thou put off all to the laſt caſt? ſo did the thiefe upon the croſſe. Lo here 1 ſoules all mire and dirt, that nothing could be diſcerned in them but filth, and putrefaction; their faces were ſo mired with ſin that nothing of goodneſſe could be diſcovered, yet theſe are now in heaven, all purified Saints, in whom there is no blemiſh, no ſpot, all crowned ſpotleſſe heires of glory, without the leaſt ſpeck of the inke of ſin upon them. Haſt thou ſinned beyond theſe thinkeſt thou? it is hardly credible, but ſuppoſe that free-grace hath not (ſo far as thou canſt finde) any where ſet a ſtamp of love upon a ſoul ſo actually wicked as thou art before God; Yet ſecondly, *There is never a Saint this day in glory, that was not as ſeminally and habitually wicked, as thou art or canſt be.* And free-grace looked upon him in reſtraining the corruptions of his heart, and preventing him, otherwiſe he had run with thee to the ſame exceſſe of riot and wickedneſſe; *David* was as filthy a wretch, when he wallowed and tumbled in his naturall blood, as thou art or canſt be, but to paſſe on to a fourth conſideration, which will hang upon a chaine with this.

Act. 2.

2.

4. Fourthly, *If thou couldst suppose that infinite free-grace, never yet did so great a work, as to wash and save such a sinfull soul as thine is, yet this could not in reason be a just hinderance to thy Faith; because, the depth of infinite love and free-grace, was never yet sounded.* Though thou couldst truly say, God never manifested his power and good will, in pardoning such a person of hell, as I am; yet what would follow? Therefore God cannot pardon me, or therefore God will not pardon me: Did ever God do his utmost, Christian? thousands of thirsty, filthy creatures, since the world began, have been bringing their buckets, and diving into the infinite depth of eternall love, but did ever any *Ethiopian* soul, dive so low as to bring up a stone from the bottome? was ever any sinfull soul, that was brought to the streams of free mrrcy, such a capacious bucket that it could not be filled without grating upon the bottome of unfadomable love? nay did ever any carry away so much for their own wants, that they left the living fountain at a low water? *Paul* brought as large a bucket, as any, and had as much need of a great measure of free grace: Well, he plungeth himselfe in, but doth he dive to the bottome, or doth he not, almost drowned in the depth of eternall sweetnes, turn head and come up againe with his belly and throat, and mouth, full of living waters, from the springs of eternall love? And cries out Ω βάθος. *O the depth of the riches, &c.* Mark how he puts all the children of love upon diving into the depth, but puts them out of hope of finding the bottome or top of that height *and depth, and length, & breadth of love*, Eph. 3, 17, 18, 19. *which passeth knowledge.* It is not so much to thee whom God hath pardoned, as whom God will pardon; is not the fountain of his love dry? are the springs yet running? nay, can he pardon beyond the measure of his former mercies? then how can thy sins be too great to be pardoned? were there never such sinners pardoned? *Behold* (saith God)

Rom. 11. 33.

Eph. 3. 17, 18, 19.

Esa 43. 18, 19.

God) I will do a new thing in the earth, I will make a way in the wildernesse, and rivers in the desert; therefore remember not the former things, consider not the things of old, not to stint the Lord by them; What? doe you tell me (saith God) what I have done? I can do more then ever I yet did; *I am* not tied to presidents, I can make them.

Fifthly, *There is as much reason on thy part for Jesus Christ to recive thee, though thou beest (as thou sayest) the worst of sinners, as ever there was in* Noah, Daniel, *or* Job, *for him to receive them.* This is Master *Rutherfords* note, What internall cause was there thinkst thou in any spotlesse Saints of glory, why Jesus Christ gave them Faith here, and hath now crowned them with a crown of glory? was there any? *Esa* 43.25. I (saith God) *am he that blotteth out transgressions for mine own names sake.* God for his own sake elected them, therefore Christ died for them; Christ of his own good will powred out his blood for them; therefore he gave them power to beleeve, and come to him; here is all the cause (*ab extra*) from without still. And is there lesse cause in Christ for thee, then there was for them? looke in his Gospell-promises; or is there lesse cause in thee, then a meer nothing? But I shall make this more full in a sixth position, which I shall commend to thy consideration, which is this, 5. Rut. Trial of Faith, P, 20. Esa. 43.25.

Sixtly, *that God never received any soule, because it had a portion to set it off.* Thou sayest, O I cannot beleeve, &c. why I am not worthy of salvation, I am a great sinner, I have been an ancient sinner. Well then, suppose that thou never hadst to thy knowledge commited actuall sins, but wert (as thou thinkest) clean, and spotlesse, then thou couldst come to Jesus Christ, and think hee would accept of thee. *Thy mony perish with thee*; doest thou think that Christ, *that gift of* God, can be purchased with the money of thy merits? Doth Christ take any souls, be- 6.

cause they are worthy? or doth he therefore take them, that he might make them worthy? doth Christ therefore take a filthy mired sinner, because it is unclean? or that he might wash it from its uncleanness? God *gives* his Son, thou mistakest if thou thinkst he can be bought of thee, either for love or money; canst thou make Christ rich with the coblers ends of thy righteousness? thinkest thou he that hath the inexhaustible treasury of righteousness, dost thou think he cares for thy farthings? wilt thou bring thy drops to the bottomles Ocean of his bloody merits? M. Rutherford "*Your peny-worths cannot roll about* "*that everlasting wheel of free-grace, the decree of ele-* "*ction, nor bow, nor break Christs free-heart, to save you* "*more then another.* The Garden of free grace (Christian) hath never a weed of humane merit in it; no nor yet is there a space to set it in. The Robe of Christs righteousnesse is rich, and full enough, and needeth not the dunghill patches of thy merits; That new cloth will not endure to be patched with thy old rags. Christ is a Noble-Bridegroom, that would take a portion with his spouse, if she could bring a proportion for him; *Adam*, if he could have got it up, might have been married to God with a dowry. But for as much as now that cannot be, perfection is not attainable. Christ scorns thou shouldst say, Thou hast brought him a farthing. The men of the earth shall not make him rich. The first marriage-contract God made with man, he demanded a portion, and proffered the joynture of glory: But when man with all his scrapings could not pay it, Come, saith Christ, I will take thee with nothing then. *Do all, or take all,* is Christs Dilemma to the Children of men.

7. Lastly, Consider, *That by how much the greater and more abominable sinner thou art, by so much shall the Lord Christ attain his ends more fully which he aims at, in saving any souls.* Doest thou ask what that is? It is

is his own glory, the glory of his free grace. God when he declares his free-grace to any soul, makes a particular Proclamation, Come, let all the world see the power of my mercy, and the good will that is in my bowels, that I can wash such a stained soul that is nothing else but sin, that I will pardon such an old inveterate sinner; Now by how much thy sins are more and greater, by somuch God more sets out the vertue of his balm, in healing such old putrified stinking wounds. Luk. 7. 47.

Secondly, *God knows, such sinners once pardoned and changed, will more glorifie him.* They that have much forgiven, *will love much.* 2.

Thirdly, *God shall have glory from such a sinner, in that others by his example, shal be kept from despair, and quickned to leave their sins, and trust in Gods mercy,* Psal. 34. 6. & 51. 31. Come therefore, beleeve, rest on Christ, Let not thy unworthinesse, thy great, thy many sins keep thee from Christ. *Eusebius* in his third book of Eccles. Hist. cap. 20. hath a story of *John* the Apostle, who at *Ephesus* finding a young man of a goodly body, gracious face, and fervent minde, commended him to one of the Bishops or Elders to take care of him; The Elder accordingly did instruct him, and at length baptized him; This young man afterwards became very wicked, and dissolute, seduced by wicked companions: First, became a companion of their feasts and cups, and then of their thieving, and robberies; at last grew to a very great height of disorder and outrage, and became a robber on the mountains. *John* returning to *Ephesus*, enquiring for the young man of the Elder, hears this news; Saint *John* after rebuking the Elder for his negligence, rode to the mountaine, which this young man (now grown to be a Captain of robbers) kept, Saint *John* being taken of the thievish watch, desired to be brought to their Captain, and accordingly was; when he saw him coming, and knew it was *John*, he was stricken with shame, and fled away; Euseb Eccles. hist. l. 3. c. 20.

away; Saint *John* pursueth after him, crying, *My son, why flyest thou from thy father? O son, tender my case, be not afraid, as yet there remaineth hope of salvation, I will undertake for thee with Christ, I will dye for thee if need be as Christ dyed for us, I will hazard my soul for thine, trust to me, Christ hath sent me.* He hearing this, stood still, trembled, and wept, embraced Saint *John*, and wept bitterly. The Apostle, when he had promised, and protested to procure pardon for him of our Saviour, prayed upon his knees, kissed him, and brings him to the Church, preacheth to him, fasts with him, and leaves him not, before he had restored him a penitent beleever. Is this thy condition Christian? hast thou been well principled? and hast thou forgot all thy Sermons and admonitions, given or preacht to thee, and art thou turned dissolute, disorderly, guilty of all wickednesse? and now in stead of coming to Christ by Faith, doest thou, wouldst thou fly from him? See thy Christ pursuing thee, calling, inviting, *Ah, why doest thou fly from me that dyed for thee? turn, turn, beleeve, be not afraid, as yet there remaineth hope of salvation in my merits, I will undertake with my father for thee, I have dyed for thee, I will hazzard my favour with my father for thine; trust to me, O now stand still, tremble, weep, pray, turn, trust in the Lord Jesus Christ:* Thou art unworthy, but Christ is worthy, he hath grace sufficient for thee; he hath a good will to save thee, yea, eagerly bent to thy salvation; hee perswades, he swears, he pleads, he appeals, he wishes groaning, he professeth he knows not how to destroy thee; he weeps over thee, he invites thee, he comes from heaven to call thee, he dies for thee, he sends messengers to invite thee, he hath washed as filthy wretches as thou art; If he hath not, yet he can, he never shewed the utmost of his free-grace, he hath as much reason to save thee, as ever he had to save any of his Saints, for themselves. He never took penny-worth of merit with any;

any; He ſhall the more glory, by how much thou art more unworthy; Free-grace ſhal more ſhew it ſelfe; Thou (if once forgiven) will love him the more; Other great ſinners will be ready to truſt in him from thy example. Come now, turn, beleeve, eſchew evill, doe good, *Though your ſins were as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as ſnow; Though as crimſon, they ſhall be as white as wooll.*

SERM. IIII.

ROM. 10. 6.

Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into Heaven?

AM come to treat of a third mistaken ground of Faith.

1. Some Christians dare not cast themselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ, because they conceive they are not enough humbled.

2. Others dare not, because they conceive they are not worthy, & their sins are too many and too great. Both these mistake by conceiving that something in themselves should be a ground of Faith.

3. There are a third sort that dare not beleeve; and what hinders? this is it; they have heard that God hath from al eternity by an eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will ordain'd & determin'd some to eternal life, and others he hath past over: now they know if they be not elected, they cannot be saved, and till they know

know or have some evidence, that God hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, they conceive they have no ground to venture upon the promise, to cast themselves upon the Lord Jesus, &c. they say in their heart, *Who shall ascend into heaven*: If indeed we could see the records of Eternity, and read our names in the book of Life, then we might beleeve: To these now saith our Apostle here:

Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above.

I shall now come directly to speak to the subject.

Quis scit an nos hæreditas illa æternæ ac cœlestis vitæ maneat. Calv. ad loc.

Cap. 4.

How such Christians may be satisfied and comforted, as think they have no warrant to beleeve, because they conceive they are not elected, or do not know whether they be elected or no?

ALas! *saith a poor Christian, why do you tell mee of beleeving? Sure I am, none can bee saved, that is not elected; I can see no ground to make me think that God hath chosen me to life, before the foundations of the world, nay, I am confident God hath not elected me, but past me over in his eternall decree.* Now to this trouble of spirit, I will speak something: first, by way of premise; secondly, by way of consolation and direction.

First, *By way of premise.* It is an ill way of cuting such a wound, by breaking truths head, to make a plaister; as the Arminians, Papists, and Antinomians do. Let me therefore, first, shew you what the truth is, and then

ſhew you, with what conſiderations, in a conſiſtency with the truth, a Chriſtian ſo unwarrantably by this ſcruple ſtopt in his way of beleeving, may be ſet a going again; and there will be left an even path upon the road of truth for a troubled ſpirit to go on in its way of beleeving, and that both ſteadily, and nimbly. Know therefore,

1. Firſt, it is a truth, *That from all eternity, God made choice of a particular and determinate number of perſons, to ſave them and none other; nor can any be ſaved, but thoſe who were ſo elected, and whoſoever are ſo elected, ſhall not fall away.* This is the truth of God, which muſt ſtand firm againſt whoſoever they bee, that either ſay there is no election, or an election at random; (as the Arminians hold) or a ſlippery one, that is, alterable, (as Papiſts hold) or that it is made in time, &c.

2. Secondly, It is a truth, *That God never elected any, becauſe he foreſaw they would beleeve and repent, and walk holily; but becauſe he hath elected them, therefore they beleeve, and repent, &c.*

3. Thirdly, It is a truth, *That thoſe that are thus from all eternity elected, may come to know, and particularly, and fully, and aſſuredly to know they are ſo elected, and choſen of God.*

4. Nay, Fourthly, It is a truth, *That it is the duty of every Chriſtian, to ſtrive to make his calling and election ſure, to labor to know that his name is written in the book of life.* It is that which the Apoſtle *Peter* cals for at Chriſtians hands.

5. Nay fifthly, It is a truth, *That there are but a very few elected, and whoſoever is elected, ſhall beleeve, and more then are elected, neither can nor ſhall beleeve; Many are called and few are choſen*; and thoſe that are ordained to the end, are ordained to the means, they are *created to good works.* Theſe are thoſe propoſitions which I deſired to premiſe, and thoſe which the Devill and his inſtru-

ments abuse, to the unwarrantable perplexing of poore soules. These are (all) the truths of God, which do and shall remaine true, though all the world be found liars; but what of all this? I know none of these premises that will warrant such a conclusion as this, *Then I have no ground to beleeve, except I know that I were one of those few, whose names God hath written in his booke of eternity.* The Papist, and Arminian, and Libertines, now take another course, to cure the perplexed spirit, and makes no bones of it; to slay a truth, to heale a conscience. To this end, they have devised such charmes to hang about the necks of sick soules, as these are. *There is no such matter as any decree of election, or God elects us for foreseen works*; and if there bee an election, it is not particular, but the decree is entred thus at random, in the Court rols of eternity. *All that beleeve shall be saved*, without a particular entrance of the number or names, as if God had not said, *I know thee by name*; and if there bee any elected, they stand upon slippery ground, *Elected names may be blotted out, or added in*; as if Gods Booke were more blotted then a Mercers shop-book. Or if there be any elected, yet, *it is impossible to know that I am elected, nor I cannot have any assurance of my mansion-house in glory, till I have taken possession of it.* But this is to bruise the head, for a plaister for the heele. On the contrary, another generation maintain, election to be the object of Faith, and ignorantly maintaine, *Faith to be the eye of the soule reading its name written in Gods book, from all eternity, an apprehension of our particular election, &c.* But, as these doo unwarrantably wound tender consciences, so the other are bad chirurgions to heal such wounds. If I mistake not, we shall find cordials enough to refresh such swooning spirits, without buying them at so deare a rate, as the sale of a dram of precious truth. Therefore leaving these premises, to be held and maintained, as the sure

pillars of eternall truth I come in the next place to propound some considerations that may comfort and satisfie poor souls, thus unwarrantably troubling themselves, [*salva veritate Dei*] the head of truth yet remaining without a wound or scar. That is my next work, and to that end consider,

First, thou sayest, *If I knew I were one of those that God had elected, then indeed I had some ground, in order to my salvation, to relie upon the promises; but unlesse I be elected, such reliance will be rather a fond and unwarrantable presumption, then a warranted and well-grounded Faith.*

1. First, Consider, (Christian 1) *That Faith is not an apprehension of particular election, but an application of generall promises.* Thou art mistaken (without any ground) in the object of true Faith, Christ calleth upon all, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is preached, in his Gospel to beleeve, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come, and buy.* Isai.55.1,2. John was sent *to bear witnesse of the truth, that all men through him might beleeve,* Joh.1.7. Joh.6.29. Christ layeth it as a duty upon all the people, *That they should beleeve on him whom God had sent.* Now can we imagine that the meaning of Christ was, that they should beleeve, that al of their names from eternity, were in the Court-rolls of eternity. The Gospel obligeth all that hear it, to beleeve; but doth the Gospel lay an obligation upon any, to beleeve a lye? Faiths object is the promises of the Gospell of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Faiths work in the soul, not to close with the decree of God, and to bosome that, but to close with the promises, and imbrace them. It is Faiths work, to eye Christ, in a particular apprehension, through the prospective of a promise, not to eye Christ, as the souls Saviour, through the mystery of Gods predeterminate purposes, *Heb.*10.23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith, without wavering*; well, but upon what grounds, the next words tell us, *For he is faithfull,* Heb.10.23.

that

that hath promised, the *sure word*, not the *sure decree* of God, is the object of our justifying Faith. Now, where hath God left thee such a line of promise as this? *Thou shalt be elected to glory*, or, *I will elect thee to glory*. God hath said, I will pardon, *I will heal*, *I will ease you*; and these words, God cals thee to rest upon, as sure and faithfull words: God hath said, *He that beleeveth on the Son, hath everlasting life*; but he hath never said, *He that beleeveth in my decree, hath everlasting life*. Indeed, if our election were that which were to be the first thing to be beleeved, it were something to scruple a Christian, and it would bee enquired into, how wee should know that we are elect; for it is necessary, that wee have some certainty of knowledge of that which is to beleeved, that it should be evident to us; but there is no such mater. The promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, are our object, which not being particular, but generall, make our way smooth; As for example, we have a promise, *Joh.* 3.16. *Whosoever beleeves in him, shall not perish but have eternall life*. This promise now, it is thy work to beleeve, *viz.* that beleeving in him, *I shall not perish, but have everlasting life*. Doest thou say, how shall I know this promise is made to me? what ground hast thou for that question? when as in the promise, *there* is no restriction, *Whosoever beleeves*. The writing runs, *To all persons to whom these presents come*, what should they do? beleeve in the *Lord Jesus*; rest and rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ *for eternall life*. The generall promise is by thee particularly to be applyed, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden* (saith Christ) *and I will ease you*. This is now thy duty, to come unto Christ, but sayest thou, I cannot come, I do not know I am elected; Christian, does Christ say, *Come unto me all you that are elected, and I will ease you*? No, he saith, *Come unto me all ye that are weary*. Suppose a man had an intention to give to such a particular number of

Joh. 2.36.

Joh. 3 16.

Mat. 5 29.

of persons, such a quantity of mony, and were resolved with himself, to give to none other but those, yet should make a proclamation, that whosoever came to him acknowledging their poverty, he would relieve, in the mean while, secretly with himselfe determining, not to give a penny to any, but those whose names he had in his book, and who should come; and knowing that none of the rest would come, but be too proud to come and take it, were it warrant enough for any to refuse coming upon this score? *I hear he hath made a book, & though he makes a generall offer, yet he will give but to a few persons, and for my part I do not think I am one of them. If he will send me word, I am one of those whose name is in his book, I care not though I go.* It is thy case Christian, apply it in secret; wilt thou not beleeve and go to Christ, because thou doest not know thou art particularly elected? fear lest for this cause *salvation* be denyed thee. But so much for the first,

Simile.

2. Secondly, Consider, *That thy election cannot be known to thee, till thou doest beleeve.* Papists say, It cannot at all be known assuredly to thee, till thou comest to see thy name in heaven thy self; but that is false; but this is truth, that til thou doest beleeve, thou canst never know whether thou beest elected or no. The eternall decrees of God, are only demonstrable to us [*a posteriori*] from the effects; who hath ascended up unto heaven at any time, to search the records of eternity?

Iob.6 46. Mat.11.27. Mat.24.36. First, *All that is re-created of God is by the Son, Ioh.6. 46.* No man hath *seen the father save he which is of God, he hath seen the father.* Nor can any thing be known of the father, but by the Son, *Mat.* 11. 27. Now, where hath the Son revealed the fathers secret decrees any where? when there was but a question concerning the time of those great things mentioned *Mat.*24.36.*v.*1. Christ tells them, *v.*36. *Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no nor the Angels, nor the Son,* Mark 13.32. *but*

the

the father onely, Whether the Son as man, did not know Gods ſecrets ſo far, or whether (according to *Aquinas*) *ideo dicitur neſcire, quia nos ſcire non facit*, he therefore may be ſaid not to know, becauſe he will not ſuffer us to kuow, I ſhall not diſpute, either of both will ſerve our turn; Gods particular decree of election, is a ſecret, lockt up in the boſome of him who is the ancient of dayes, of which, either Chriſt himſelf [as man] was ignorant, or concerning which (to be ſure) he was ſo ſecret, as never to reveal his fathers thoughts; he was indeed (as God) the privy councellor of eternity, but a ſecret keeper of his fathers thoughts, and counſels, as well as an obedient Son to his commands in revealing his fathers wil: Chriſt indeed tells his diſciples, *he had choſen them*, but it was thought, not becauſe they beleeved that he choſe them, yet after that hee had called them, and they were come to him, and had walked conſtantly and obediently with him, that he told them ſo. Chriſt hath not revealed particular election to any before Faith. Ioh. 15. 16.

Secondly, Nor *ever will he*. Will Chriſt think you ever reveal the ſecrets of eternity to thoſe that actually are his utter enemies? Election is one of Gods ſecrets, it is the roll wherein the eternall covenant, betwixt this or that particular ſoul, and the King of eternall glory, is written and inrolled: Now the Scripture indeed ſaith, *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his covenant*. But hath the Scripture ever ſaid, the ſecrets of the Lord are with unbeleeving damned wretches? for (he that beleeveth not is damned alleady) no, when the ſoule is once called, and beleeves on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, then God in his due time reveals the ſecrets of eternity to ſuch a ſoul, & puts it on ſpectacles to read the particular covenant, that he hath made, entred, and enrolled in the court of heaven, which is wrtiten in ſmall and inviſible characters, and cannot be Pſal. 25. 14.

read but with enlightned eyes, guided by the eternal spirit. Besides

Thirdly, Consider *the phrase of Scripture*, how it doth reveal to our *particular election*. *Peter* calls to them, to *Strive to make their calling and election sure*. First your calling, then your election, 1 *Joh.* 2. 5. & 3. 6. 10. It is the constant language of Scripture, and the sense of all the Apostles, that by our Faith, and fruits of our sanctification, which are the consequents, and attendants upon Faith, we must know, whether we be in God, or no; whether we be the sons of God, or no; our particular election must be known to us by the effects; doest thou therefore stick at this? I must know that I am elected, otherwise I cannot beleeve, thou cuttest off the means by which thou shouldst attain to thy end. Thy end is to know thy election. Now the means by which thou shouldst attain to this particular knowlege and assurance, must be Faith and the fruits of it: This thou casts off, a thing so absurd that thou wouldst condemn it in any worldly matter.

1 Ioha. 5.
2 Cha. v 6, 10

3 Consid. Thirdly, *Consider thou hast no ground for thee to thinke thou art not elected, unlesse it be thy unbeleef.* God hath made open proclamation: *Whosoever beleeveth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life: Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise turn him away.* Let all come, and I will ease you. Suppose a King should make a proclamation concerning some Malefactors: *Let every one that will, come to me and beg his pardon and he shall have it.* Though he hath a secret reservation of thoughts in his bosome to pardon none but such and such, because he is confident the rest will be too proud and stout to come; yet upon what justifiable ground shall any Malefactor think the King intends not to pardon him before he comes to him and humbly begs his pardon: Shall he stand, and at a distance say, Let the King send me a paticular pardon, and then I will come for

for it and thank him? but till I am ſure he intendeth to give it, I will never take the paines to go. Upon what grounds ſhall ſuch a malefactor think the King intends not to give him his life? hath he not good cauſe to think his ſtoutneſſe is the cleareſt and proximate cauſe? God ſaith come, beleeve, and you ſhall live; Thou ſaieſt now, no, I do not think I ſhall live, let mee know that and then I will beleeve; what ground haſt thou to think thou ſhalt not have the end, but becauſe thou wilt not uſe the meanes? Suppoſe a man lay very ſicke, his phyſicians ſhould preſcribe him ſuch and ſuch meanes, in order to his recovery; no not he, he remembers, *His time is in Gods hand, and he cannot paſſe it*, hee is ſure, hee will ſee firſt whether God will let him live, or no, and if God will ſend him a leaſe of his life, then he wil uſe meanes. Suppoſe now ſuch a man ſhould die, what might any think the cauſe why he dyed ſo ſoon? What? the period that God had ſet to his daies? or, his own refuſing the meanes to ſuſtain his life? But this will be further enlarged in a fifth conſideration.

Fourthly, Conſider but this, *That all thoſe whom God hath elected, he hath not onely elected to the end, but to the meanes.* Gods eternall decree of election, is not entred thus in the Court-book, *Bee it ordained, that ſuch and ſuch a perſon ſhall live eternally:* But, bee it ordained, *That ſuch or ſuch a perſon, ſhall in time be called, and beleeve the Goſpel, and walke holily like one of my children, and after receive the Crowne of glory.* Wee were predeſtinated, *That wee ſhould be for the praiſe of his glory*, Eph. 1. 12. & 2. 10. *For wee are his workmanſhip, created in Jeſus Chriſt unto good workes, which God hath before ordained that wee ſhould walk in them.* God hath ordained the meanes, as well as the end, and you muſt firſt know by your calling and beleeving that you are elected to them, before you can know you are elected to eternall life: the ſame God that hath made it a

4.

decree of eternity, this and that man shall bee saved, hath also made it a decree, that this or that man should believe. Beleeving that I am elected and one chosen of God to eternall life, is a piece of sense, not of justifying Faith (saith the learned and pious *Rutherford*) and it is a piece of sense too, to think I beleeve, as I have at large heretofore shewed, but it is an higher thing, to beleeve and bee fully perswaded that I shall infallibly be saved, then to think I truly beleeve, it is a step higher; the demonstration is plaine, because no Christian can think that he shall bee undoubtedly saved unless he thinks first, that he doth truly and savingly beleeve. Now therefore thy first work must bee to get a sense of Faith, to beleeve that thou beleevest; for thou wilt never know that God hath ordained thee to life, unless thou first know that he hath ordained thee to beleeve, 1 *Thes* 5.9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtaine salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, by beleeving in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we are said *to be elected in Christ*, that is, to obtain salvation in Christ, and by beleeving in Christ, which is the true sense of that place, *what ever Arminians wrest it for.* But I passe on to a fifth

5. 5. Consider, *That by standing at this scruple, thou doest not onely sinnefully, and unwarrantably, and endlesly perplex thy selfe, and hinder thine own soules peace, but also thou calleſt in question Gods wisdome, and slanderest his charters of free grace.* First, thou calleſt in question Gods wisdom.

1. 1. *God in his wisdome hath thought it fit, that his particular election of any soule to eternall life, should bee concealed from it till it hath beleeved*, to let Faith go before sense; thou sayest no, but it is better for me to know I am elected, and then I have ground of beleeving: God saith, beleeve, and then thou shalt see, and this is the way of his wisdome with soules: thou sayest,

no,

no, let me see, and then I will beleeve: God saith, trust me, I will bee faithfull; thou saiest, no, I will not trust thee a jot further then I can see thee.

2. *God in his wisdom hath thought it a sufficient ground for a soule to beleeve in him, and trust to him, that in the promulgation of his Gospel, he hath shut more out of heaven, that have not shut out themselves.* Thou saist, no, I will know whether God hath shut me out, before God shall know whether I will shut out my selfe, or no; God judgeth it most fit, that the sinner should speake first, and tell him, whether he will accept of his grace tendred, or no; Thou saiest no, but I will know first, whether God that hath made his large tenders of grace will make good what he tenders, nay, thou standest upon Gods seal, as if thou durst not trust his word; God sends his proclamation, and causeth it to be proclamed in thine ears; thou saiest, this is not enough, let me have his broad-seal. 2.

Secondly, Nay, herein *Thou standerest his Charters in free grace,* Those say, *Whosoever beleeveth shall live*; thou saiest, in effect, no; for if I be not elected, nay, if I do not know I am elected, I can have no ground to beleeve; what dost thou but slander the charter of free-grace; as invalid and insufficient, and good for nothing? and is it fitting that the creature should thus deale with the Creator?

6. *If thou wilt but believe, nothing that is in Gods decree, shall or can hinder thee of salvation:* The whole Gospel runs in this language, *Whosoever beleeves in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Hee that beleeveth on the Son hath everlasting life.* Lay thy damnation, Christian, to Gods charge, if beleeving thou perishest. *O Israel* (saith God) *damnation is of thy selfe.* Never fear it Christian, God will wash his hands and clear his word too, of thy blood, or any sinners in the world: The righteous judge of the whole earth, 6. Joh. 3.16.39. & 6.40,47. & 11.25.

will do no unrighteous action, neither ſhal any falſhood proceed out of his lips, *He is not as man that he ſhould lie.* Thou ſhalt never, nor ſhall any damned creature ever ſay, if the thread of Gods word had not broke, I had not falne into this pit. Thy damnation ſhall be of thy ſelf, not of him, nor for any failing of his faithfulneſſe.

Laſtly, Conſider, *Heaven and glory are not ſo inconſiderable things, but they are worth adventuring for, if thou hadſt but a poſſibility of obtaining them, though thou hadſt no certainty.* Thou ſaiſt, except I were ſure God had elected me, to what purpoſe ſhould I beleeve? unleſſe I bee pre-ordained to ſalvation, it is impoſſible I ſhould be ſaved. Chriſtian! haſt thou ſo cheap and low thoughts of heaven and glory? a vain ſtudent, that hath but heard of ſuch a thing, as a philoſophers ſtone, which they ſay hath a vertue in it, to turn other metals into gold, he hath but heard that there is ſuch a thing to be found out, or perhaps doth but fancy ſuch a thing findable, with expence of much time and ſtudy, and money; he upon this conceit, laies out a great deale of his eſtate, expends a great deal of time, thinks no time too much to ſpend, no money too much to be expended to try a concluſion? he hath no certaine confidence perhaps of ſuch athings poſſibility; however, no certainty, that he hath found out the very way of finding it perhaps, hee hath many diſcouragements from, divers that have ſpent their eſtates, buſied their braines loſt abundance of time, and yet never could finde it, yet he goes on carried on with a ſtrong fancy, hoping not to fail. Queen *Eſther*, when ſhe went in to the King, had no certainty of finding favour, yea, ſhe wanted not ſome diſheartnings, in regard of a cuſtome in the Court of *Perſia*, that none ſhould come in to the King, till they were called, and yet more, ſhe had not been called of thirty dayes (an extraordinary time) Yet

ſee

see her resolution, he business was extraordinary, many lives depended upon her venturing her life, she puts on a gallant resolution to go in, and saith, *If I perish I perish*, and God blessed her enterprize, and she obtained the holding out of the golden Scepter, and the answer of her desire. Thou saist, *I am not sure I am elected*; I say yet, beleeve, Thou art and mayest be sure, If thou doest bleeeve, thou shalt live; thou hast the word of God for it; It is but the expence of a little time in praying, hearing, fasting, &c. Never was there one experience of one, one beleeved and was damned, to dishearten thee; God calls thee to it, if thou doest not, not the lives of others but thy own soul is in danger of perishing; God hath promised the golden Scepter, Heaven and Christ, are worth venturing more for, then thou canst adventure: Go in, resolve to rest upon Christ, do it truly, and my soule for thine if thou perishest. Thus I have shortly endeavoured to speake something, how little soever, and in how much weakness soever, to poor soules pleading this bar to Faith: Consider of it, you see this still remaines the great work, of a Christian to obey Gods revealed Law, not to search into his secret will: Hear O man! what God hath required of thee, *Beleeve and be saved*, make not blocks in thine own way. Art thou weary and heavy laden? come unto him that saith, *Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you*: Ah! but (wilt thou say) I am a poore vile unworthy wretch, what have I to do to rest my impure hands upon a pure Christ? But for this I shall God willing, speak something the next time.

SERM.

SERM. V.

MAT. 12.31.

All ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy againſt the holy Ghoſt ſhall not bee forgiven to men.

I Have told you ſome are hindred in their coming to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt from a miſtake of the true grounds of Faith.

Some againe from a miſtake of their own condition. I have done with the former; I am now come to Satans loſt block, that hee ordinarily laies for the Beleever, to ſtumble upon in the way of beleeving; when he cannot perſwade them to deſpaire of their intereſt in Gods hidden decree, nor yet in regard of the hardneſſe of their own heart, nor yet in reſpect of their unworthineſſe to keep from Chriſt. But the poore ſoule looks above all theſe, to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, then hee ſhoots his laſt arrow, by ſuggelting to the ſoule ſuch thoughts as theſe; but what

if

if I have ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt? That generall rule, *Mat.* 12. 31. *All ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven*, hath a particular acception, *But whoſoever blaſphemes the Holy Ghoſt ſhall never be forgiven.* And if I be within that, I have nothing to do with the generall promiſe. Now Sathan having here to do with a poor credulous ſoule, that is far eaſier to beleeve evill, then any good of it ſelfe, hath the fuller blow at it, and followes on while the iron is hot, he knowes if he can but juggle the ſoule into this perſwaſion, beleeving is at an end. And as there are very many, whom he either firſt or laſt, batters with this engine of death; ſo in regard of the weakneſſe and ignorance of the moſt of Chriſtians, eſpecially in the beginning of their converſion, there are not a few that are wounded with this dart, and will hardly bee beaten out of the groundleſſe conceit, that they have really and indeed ſinned that unpardonable ſinne againſt the holy Ghoſt, which occaſions (poſſibly) many a daies ſadneſſe and dejection groundleſly. Now in regard that this temptation is entertained ordinarily through a defect of knowledge and underſtanding, of what ingredients that compounded wickedneſs is made of, I ſhall in ſpeaking to the ſatisfaction of a poor ſoule under this complaint, ſpeake ſomething concerning the nature of that ſinne, which if once truly underſtood, wil be enough of it ſelf, to let ſuch poore ſouls ſee how groundleſly they have yeelded to that temptation of Sathan.

Cap. 5.

How to satisfie a poor soule that conceives, that it hath sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, and therefore ought not, may not beleeve.

The complaint

ALAS! (saith a poor Christian) *Why doe ye tell me of beleeving? I know sir, there is a fulnesse and freenesse of mercy in Jesus Christ, for poore sinners, yea, though their sins be many and great: But I am sure, the sin against the Holy ghost shall never be forgiven, and I am confident that very sin have I committed. I have sinned against light and knowledge, I have had blasphemous thoughts, and have in heart denyed Christ, and been tempted to deny the truth of Jesus Christ, &c.*

Now to the satisfaction of a poor soule under his perplexity of spirit, let me speak something: First, By way of premise: Secondly, By way of consideration.

Chrysostome thinks it is call'd unpardonable, because it is not easily pardoned.
Mat. 12 31.
Mat. 3. 28.
Luke 12. 10.
1 Iohn 5. 16.

1. By way of Premise. *It is a truth that there is such a sin may be committed, as is the sin against the holy Ghost, and being committed, it is unpardonable.* That such a sin there is, is plain from severall places of Scripture, *Mat.* 12. 31. *But the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven men. Mark* and *Luke* both make mention of the same passage of truth from our Saviours mouth, *Mar.* 3. 28. *Luke* 12. 10. The Apostle *John* makes also mention of it, 1 *John* 5. 16. *There is a sin to the death*; And the Apostle to the *Hebrewes* in two Chapters, makes a more full and spicificall discovery, *Heb.* 6. 4, 5, 6, 7. & 10. 26, 27. It is called the sinne against the Holy Ghost, not that it is onely against the third person in the Trinity, who is the Holy Spirit for the sin is against the whole Trinity, the three persons

Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6 & 10 26, 27.
Usher.
Ursin.
Paræus

ma-

making but one divine Eſſence; but becauſe it is a direct oppoſition, and reſiſtance of the light of knowledge, with which the Holy Ghoſt hath enlightned the heart of him that hath committed it; for although the work of enlightning, bee a work of the God-head, without it ſelfe, and ſo a work of all three perſons joyntly, according to the knowne rule of Divinity? yet it is a worke which in the order of working is ordinarily attributed to the third perſon in Trinity. There is ſuch a ſin called by Chriſt, *Blaſphemy againſt the Holy-Ghoſt*, he being that Perſon, whoſe office it is, in the order of the God-heads working, to enlighten the mindes with knowledge of the truth, *Eph.*1.17, 18. *Heb.*6.4.——Secondly, this ſin once committed, is unpardonable: this is alſo directly proved from thoſe forementioned places in the Goſpel, *Mat.*12.31, *&c. Heb.*6.4. And therefore is called by the Apoſtle *John*, *The ſin unto death*, in reſpect of the end and puniſhment of it.

Opera Trinitatis ad extra ſunt indiviſa.

Severall of the Fathers, and ſo *Maldonat* and *Brentius* think it is ſaid to be unpardonable, becauſe it cannot be excuſd Eph.1.17,18. Heb.6.4. 1 Iohn. 5.16

Secondly, *It is as true that the elect ones cannot commit this ſin, or ever be guilty of it.* Chriſt hath ſaid, *He hath given unto them eternall life, and they ſhall not periſh. The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure*, 2 Tim.2. 19. They ſhall be kept *through the power of God unto ſalvation*, 1 *Pet.* 1.5. They that fall away were never in, nor ever of the number of the elect; for *if they had been of them, they would (no doubt) have continued with them. But in that they go out and fall away, it is that they might be made manifeſt they were not of them*, 1 Epiſt. of *John* 2.19. Who ſo ſin that ſin, Firſt, *Can never be ſaved*, Chriſt hath ſaid, *Theſe ſhall never periſh*: Secondly, *they can never repent and beleeve.* Chriſt hath ordained, that the elect ſhall repent, and beleeve, and although they may ſlip, and fall, yet hee hath ordained they ſhall riſe againe, and by repentance be recovered. Theſe things being premiſed, Let me

2. Iohn 10.28.

2 Tim.2.19.

1 Pet.1.5.

come in the next place to propound some considerations, that being seriously meditated and made use of, may serve to stay and comfort, and settle the hearts of such Christians, as yeelding to this temptation, have troubled and perplexed their own spirits.

1. First of all consider, *That as it is a certain truth that there is such a sin committible, that a creature may bee guilty of, yet it is as incertain what this sin is,* witness the various descriptions of it by the School-men: and *Augustine* and *Calvin, Bullinger* and *Brentius,* scarce any two agreeing. *Austine* thinks it one of the greatest questions in cripture, and in five severall places follows so many different opinions: see the various opinions concerning this sin in *Maldonat* in Matth. 12. 31. None ever could yet determine it, or if they have done it, it hath been unwarrantably, I mean for the specificall sin; Innumerable almost have been the opinions of the Antients; Some have thought it to be *malice against the Brethrens graces*; others, *Finall impenitency*; others despair of Gods mercy. The Papists make six species of it

1. *Impenitency.*

2. *Despaire:* (these two seem to be but consequents of it.)

3. *Obstinacy in wickednesse:* (all obstinacy in wickednesse cannot be, and how high, what degree of obstinacy constitutes it, they leave us to seek.)

4. *The resisting of a known truth:* This comes neareſt it; but yet for the heighth and degree of resistance they also leave us in the dark, and every resistance is not.

5. *The malice against our Brethren for grace and goodnesse:* This hath somthing in it tending to it, but reacheth not the full neither.

Aqu. 2. 2 q. 14. Art. 2.

6. *A sinning out of presumption of Gods mercy.* That presumption is an ingredient in this sin is certain, & that the

the sin against the Holy Ghost, is a sin of presumption but every sinning upon presumption of Gods mercy, certainly is not unpardonable: It is certainly, that blasphemy against the Holy-Ghost may be variously taken.

First, *Literally, when any blasphemous speech is spoken against the Holy Ghost.* As if any should maintaine the Holy-Ghost is not God, &c. So many of the antient fathers took it.

Secondly, *It is somtimes, and so we take it to be meant here for a sin against the Holy-Ghost: proper operations & workings,* as his enlightning grace, &c. *Heb.* 4. 6. 7. For whosoever sins the first way, sins not unpardonably, though dangerously; as Saint *Austine* largely proves, that the Texts, *Mat.* 12. 31. &c. are not to be meant of every blasphemous word, but there is *(quædam blasphemia, & quoddam verbum)* a certain word, and a certain kinde of blasphemy: Now what this is, that we are in the dark for, nor have any (except the Papists unwarrantably) dared certainly to define or describe it, so as to say, This is the unpardonable sin; Now therefore, Christian, upon what ground doest thou say *Thou hast sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost*, when neither thou nor any other can say, this or that is the sin against the Holy-Ghost? why doest thou accuse thy soule of thou knowest not what? Judge if this be not an irrationall yielding, to a groundlesse temptation. But saith a poor Christian, *I have refused the enlightening spirit, I have refused instruction, and hated counsell, and what is this, but the impardonable sin? or I have sinned against knowledge, such and such a truth I have denyed, disputed against it, &c.* To make therefore a little progresse, though positively it cannot be said, nor specifically determined, what the sin against the Holy-Ghost is, that is unpardonable (for it is certain, that every sin against the Holy-Ghost, is not unpardonable; A lye against know-

Aug. T. 10. Ser. 11. de Verbis Dom. p. 47. Coposet tractat

ledge, is a ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, *Act.* 5.3. yet not unpardonable, Jacob committed it for the bleſſing:) Yet,

1. It may be ſhewn negatively, what it is not.

2. Several ingredients may be diſcovered, that muſt be in this compound of iniquity. And in relation to thy complaint, conſider,

2. *In Spiritum vero non maledicit niſi qui ab eo illuminatus impiæ rebellionis ſibi conſcius eſt.* Calv. in Harm. 158.

Secondly, *That none can be guilty of it, but ſuch as have had a great meaſure of knowledge of Gods truth,* Heb. 6.4, 5, 6. They muſt be ſuch as have been *enlightned*, that is, ſuch as the Goſpel hath been preacht to, and received by, ſo that it hath cleared up his underſtanding from that darkneſſe and miſt of naturall blindneſſe and ignorance, in which *Adams* fall left us.

2. Secondly, *Such as have taſted of the heavenly gift*, that is, *Faith* (ſaith *Pareus*) ſuch as having heard the word, have not only been convinced of it, but given a firm aſſent of Faith to it; for it can onely be underſtood of a temporary Faith of aſſent, not of true juſtifying Faith, for that in whomſoever it is, *is kept by the power of God to ſalvation*, 1 Pet. 2.5.

3. Heb. 10.26 Thirdly, *Such as have taſted of the goodneſſe of God*; Such as have had the Goſpel preacht to them, and have apprehended it good and ſweet, received it with joy; *Heard it gladly* (as *Herod*) *Heb.* 10.26. They muſt be ſuch as have received the knowledge of the Truth; It muſt be a defection, and a declination from knowledge and a profeſſion, as is clear from that place, *Heb.* 10.26. from whence is plain, that a natural man that never was enlightned, or an heathen that never heard the word of God, or thoſe that though they have heard, yet have not had hearts to regard and receive what they hear, and give aſſent to it, Theſe cannot be guily of this unpardonable ſin; why doeſt thou therefore trouble thy ſelfe, that *thou haſt refuſed the Goſpel, and therefore thou haſt ſinned*

ned the ſin againſt the holy-Ghoſt, when the Goſpel was never made known to thee, ſo far as to enlighten thee? poſſibly thou heardeſt the word, but underſtoodſt not, regardedſt nothing. Thoſe that crucified Chriſt, were converted at *Peters* Sermon, *Act.* 2. have thine ears been ſtopt to the meanes of grace? be humbled for it, but deſpair not becauſe of it, though thou beeſt called at the ninth hour, yet if thou wilt come in at the eleventh, thou ſhalt be received, and welcome, only come. God winked at the time of thy ignorance, *Act.* 17. 30. This ſin muſt be againſt the word, heard, received, taſted &c. It is not a bare piece of originall corruption, conſiſting in a privation of knowledge, or averſneſſe unto knowledge, or vanity of heart in not regarding knowledge; but it is the higheſt piece of actuall rebellion, not for a while to ſtand at a diſtance from a pardon offered, but to begin to reach out an hand to take it, and then draw back, and ſpit in the face of that God that offers thee; This is plain, for it is a blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt in his workings; now the ſpirit doth not alwayes work with the preaching of the word, much leſſe is the Law of nature the work of the ſanctifying ſpirit: But the work of illumination and ſanctification, thoſe are the ſpirits works in which we muſt take heed of oppoſing him. This ſin is not petty-larceny, but high treaſon againſt God. But *alas! will a poor Chriſtian ſay, yet I fear, for I have received and taſted the word of truth, and I have made a ſhew of rejoycing in the good word of God, and after this have I been in my heart, thinking to deny Chriſt to be the Saviour of the world, to deny the word to be the word of truth*, and ſinned againſt knowledge.

Act. 17 30.

Thirdly, Therefore conſider, *This ſin which is the unpardonable ſin, muſt be a ſcaled ſin of thine own, continued in without repentance, & will be more then the ſin of thy heart.* That it is firſt begot in the heart, as all other ſin is, is a truth, but it goeth out of it; blaſpemy is properly commit-

v. *Bullinger. ad Matt.* 12. v. *Calv. in Harm. ad Matth.* 12.

mitted with the tongue, without question, the heart, and tongue, and hand, have all a portion in this sin unpardonable, but it is not in the thought onely: Besides, 2. *It may be thy blasphemous thoughts, which thou hast in thy heart are none of thine own*; for such thoughts there are oft times in a Christian, that are meerly cast in by Satan into the soul, neither bred in, nor nursed by the soul, nor delighted in, but are like the childe that was dead, laid (by the true mother) by another womans side. It is a little question, whether these thoughts be sin, or no? if spurned out, and rejected by thee; whether they shall be put upon thine, or upon Sathans score, to answer for? It is by all granted, that if they be sins, they are the least of sins; as suppose I should have a thought in my heart, that *there is no Christ, but he whom the Gospel speaks of were an impostor*; I know not how this thought came there, I have a suggestion to beleeve it, but my heart rises against it, cries *avoid Sathan*, I pray against it, humble my self, that my base heart should ever have such a guest for my part; I make a great question, whether these thoughts be a souls sins, any more then if a strumpet should come and lay a childe in an open porch or entry of an honest woman, it would prove that the honest woman were the mother, because the bastard lay in her entry or house, unless the law so adjudged it, in regard the door or entry was open; So unless you will say, that the heart sins by being no better shut, then to let such a thought be thrust in, questionlesse the very thought as a formall sinfull thought & motion, is not the souls, but Sathans: But however, if it be thy sin, for which thou hast cause to be humbled; *Yet it is far from this sin, this must be a constant owner and possessor of thy heart*, and a sin of a far higher nature, then ten thousand such thoughts are.

The contrary is determined by most of our Divines.

Fourthly, thou sayest, *O but I have sinned many times against knowledge, against the light of my conscience.*

Con-

Consider therefore, *That though this sin be a sin against knowledge, yet every sin against knowledge, is not this sin:* Without question *Jacob* sinned against knowledge, in saying he was his fathers son, *his very son* Esau; *and David* in committing murther, and adultery; and *Peter* in denying his Master. All these were sins against knowledge, and yet none of them sins against the Holy Ghost. It must be sin against the knowledge

1. Of that divine Truth.
2. Of some fundamentall truth of the Gospel.
3. Distinctly made known to thee. This is plain from the sixth of the *Heb.* 4 5,6. & 10. 26. And from the Pharisees commission of this sin, *Mat.* 12.31. They were convinced of it as a truth, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and did those miracles he did by the power of the Divine nature; yet sinned in their saying before the people, *This man casteth out Devils by Belzebub the Prince of Devils:* Sins of knowledge against the law directly, are far from this sin also, the sin of our first parents, it is a sin against the enlightening grace of the spirit of God, yea, though thou hast denied some truth, not fundamentall &c. Indeed for all such sins as these are, thou hast very great cause to be humbled (Christian) and to sit down and mourn bitterly, that these wickednesses may be forgiven, and doing so thou needst not despair of the pardon of them. But *alas,* (saith a poor Christian) *I have in a passion or sickness, when I knew it was the hand of God, blasphemed God, or I have at such a time for fear of threats of death, denied the work of God, and the truth of God &c.*

Fifthly, therefore consider, *That though the deniall of thy knowledg, and the truth of God, be a great piece of this sin, yet it is not enough to constitute it, and besides it must be another manner of deniall, then that which thou complainest of.* It is not enough to constitute this sin; for there must be a blasphemy: Secondly an opposition to it.

5. It must be a deliberate and advised deniall, not rash, and sudden.

Secondly, It is true, that deniall is the ingredient in this unpardonable sin: But it must be,

* 1. *A wilfull deniall, free,* not arising from fear. *Peter* so denied his master, and many of the Martyrs denied, yea, and abjured the Faith; But either, First, *Sathan by his temptations*; *Secondly*, *Or the weaknesse of their flesh*, occasioned it; for they at the same time loved Christ, and the truth of Christ.

2. *It must be a deniall, on purpose to discredit the truth out of a venome and malice of heart to it.* I may deny a fundamentall truth, in an argument and disputation, to see how another can prove it, yet I have not sinned the sin against the Holy-Ghost I hope.

3. *It must be a constant deniall,* If they shall *fall away* παραπίπτοντας [it signifies, sals all in shattars] so as an old rotten house not well at first put together. Comfort thy self therefore Christian, thou hast not sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, though thou hast possibly unadvisedly spoke with thy lips, yea, though through the violence of Sathans temptations and wickedness, or weakness of thy heart, (for fear) thou hast denied thy Saviour and his truth; onely go out and *weep beiterly*, renew thy love, regain thy favour, confesse him before men; Thus many of the Martyrs did, rending their recantation, or abjurations, & suffering Martyrdom gloriously. But yet will some poor Christian say, *Alas! yet I fear I have sinned this sin, I have hated such a godly man, envied that goodness which I saw in him, I could hardly endure such a man, whom I am confident is the Saint of God, &c.* Consider therefore in the sixth place,

Sixthly, *That the hatred and envy of every godly man, nor every envy of his goodness, or every opposition against him for it, doth not make thee guilty of this unpardonable sin.* It is possible thou mayest hate a man that is a godly man, for some civill injury he hath done to thee, or thy friend, possibly thou mayest do it ignorantly, verily thinking

* *Convicium facit ac peccat in SS. qui ipsam Spiritus Sancti illuminationē & operationem negat esse illuminationem & operationem spiritus, sed contendit & impudenter asserit impostum esse captiosa seductionē satanicā & virtutem magicā* Bullinger. in Matth. 12. 31. *Est convitiū illud quo dixerūt Christū habere Spiritū immundū, hoc est, quo Spiritū Sanctū per quem vel in quo Christus ejiciebat dæmona dicebāt esse Spiritum Satanæ.* Musc. in loc. *Proinde destinata perseverans & malitiosa rebellio sive contradictio contra manifestā veritatē est peccatū in Sp. sanctū & cū desinū rebellare Deo, ac hujus verba & opera nowocas in dubium & non amplius peccas in S. Sanctum.* Bullinger. ibi

thinking he is naught; possibly thy envy of him, may be an emulation, not being sorry that the truth lives in him, but angry to see the graces of Gods spirit live in him and not thee; these now are far from unpardonable sins, nor is every opposition of the truth of Jesus Christ, or the professors of the truth, an opposition sufficient to constitute this sin, it may be a persecution out of ignorance as *Pauls* was, and God pardoned it. 1 *Tim.* 1.13

It must be first *an hatred of, and opposition against, the truth and godlinesse of such men.* Not when thou maliceſt godlineſs, because it is in him that hath done thee a personall injury, but when thou maliceſt and hateſt a man, because he is holy, and loves the truth of God, and lives before God strictly.

Secondly, *It must be with a secret desire to extinguish and spoil the credit of God, and his truth.* When a wretch is mad to see Gods name exalted, and to see the truth of God prosper, and would fain spoil all its market. 2.

Thirdly, And *it must be an opposition to the truth, that to the wretch is known, and he is convinced,* that is a truth of Jesus Christ, yet he hateth a person, because, he entertains it and walks accordingly, and seeketh how to cut off him, and the truth; such manner of malice was the Pharisees malice, *Mat.* 12.31. Yet *alas* (saith a poor Christian) *Since I have received the Holy Ghost and tasted his gifts, I have sinned thousands of sins, renewing them every day, &c.* What hath been already said, That this sin must be an opposition, a knowing, wilfull, open, malicious opposition to the truth of Christ, were enough to answer this. But Consider, 3.

Seventhly, *It must be a totall falling away from the truth, Religion and profession of Jesus Christ,* Heb. 4. 6. Many are the Saints failings, this must be a totall falling from all grace and holineſſe; When a man clearly leaves all manner of profession of holineſſe, and falls into all manner of wickedneſſe; Now dareſt thou accuſe thy 7.

heart of this Christian? or doest thou sometimes slip, but presently renew thy covenant made with God, by a seasonable repentance, praying, crying, bettering thy life and conversation, &c. Never feare this sin; it hath many drams of the weight of hell in it more then thou complainest of.

8. Eighthly, *It is not probable* (saith Master *Rutherford*) *That then shouldst be guilty of that sin against the Holy Ghost, and none but thy selfe complain of it.* It ordinarily breaketh out into prodigious acts of wickedness, it is no chamber closet sin, though it be hatcht in thy heart, yet it goes into the mouth, and defiles that, the sinner with that reviles, and raves, and blasphemes Christ; and commonly it shewes it self further, the sinner (with *Julian*) persecuteth the Saints, whom his heart knows are Saints with fire and sword; didst thou ever do any of these things? (Christian) mistake not thy self, be humbled for thy sins and failings, but transgress not by despairing without a cause. Consider further.

9. Ninthly, *If thy sin that thou complainest of so to be the unpardonable sin as thou unwarrantably thinkest, be a trouble & a grief of heart to thee, then mayst be sure, that it is not that sin that thou takest it for*, Heb. 4. 6. *It is impossible* (saith the Apostle) *that they that commit it, should be renewed againe by repentance.* The meaning of which place is not, that if they doe repent, yet it is impossible that they should be pardoned, that were to put a lye upon the promises of the Gospel; But it is impossible, that ever they should repent to be renewed: This makes Saint *Austine* determine *finall impenitency* to be the unpardonable sin; when the wretch abusing the mercy of God that should lead him to repentance, according to the hardness of his heart, refuseth repentance, and treasureth up wrath against the day of wrath. Now though I do not think (with S. *Austin*) that this is the whole formality of that sin; nor yet (with *Aquinas* &

Aug. T. 10. Ep. de Verbis Domini. 11. p. 45.

the

the Papists) that it can be properly called a species of that sin; yet I think with almost all sober Divnes, that it is an undoubted consequent of that sin; God after the commission of that sin, by any poor wretch giving him over to a blindness of minde, and a finall hardness of heart that he cannot repent: But like *Esau, If he seeks repentance carefully with teares, yet he findes it not.* Now if thy sin be a trouble, and grief of heart to thee, thou maist be assured it is not that sin, for the undoubted consequent of that is an hardness of heart, and a reprobacy of minde.

10. *Brentius* thinks by forgiven iment excused; and so thinke all sin that is inexcusable, is sin against the Hly Ghost. v *Brent. in Mat* 12 31. ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσῃ ὁ συγχωρηθήσεται. Theop. ad loc *Quomodo peccatorũ remissionem tales assequantur, quam non quærunt neq; desiderant,* Gualther. in Matth. 12 31.

Tenthly Consider, *The sin against the Holy Ghost, neither in respect of it self and its own greatnesse, nor yet in respect of the power of Gods mercy is unpardonable.* Be it never so great, it is not infinite, as the mercies of thy God are; It is indeed a scarlet sin, but scarlet sins to the returning penitent may be pardoned, *Isai.* 1. 16. It is unpardonable (say some) in respect of Gods will, God can, but he neither ever did, nor will pardon it, for it is a sin of malice directly against pardoning mercy: Gods mercy would be stained in the pardoning of it. Secondly, It is unpardonable (say others, and those the most) *In regard that it is impossible that the sinner should repent and beleeve,* without which, there is no hope of pardoning mercy, from any Gospel-promise: And this is questionlesse true, for God hath said *Perditio tua ex te, Thy damnation O Israel is of thy self,* not of me. Though a poor wretch be damned for this sin, yet he may (proximately) thank the hardness and impenitency, and unbeleef of his own heart, not Gods will. But yet further consider,

11.

Eleventhly, *That this can be no sufficient excuse for thee, for not beleeving, because though it doth take away from thee the power of beleeving, yet it doth not excuse thee from the duty of beleeving.* Beleeving is a Gospel-duty, it is a law enjoined to all, every one is called to it,

John 3. *Mat.* 11. 29. *Iſai.* 55. 1, 2, 3. Yea, ſalvation is proffered to al thoſe that do beleeve in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; doth the Goſpel any where ſay, *Come you that have not ſinned the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, come and beleeve and you ſhall not periſh?* No ſurely, it cals to all, be youwhat you wil, let your ſins be what they can, how many, how great ſoever they can, come, beleeve, and you ſhall not periſh; it is unwarrantable then to diſobey a Goſpel-precept, upon a beleeving the temptations of thine enemy the Devil, or the groundleſſe ſuggeſtion of thine own ſpirit.

12. Laſtly, Conſider, *If thou hadſt ſinned that unpardonable ſin, thou couldſt not by any infallible demonſtration conclude thy ſelf guilty of it, before thy dying day & hour.* How wilt thou demonſtrate it, from thy hardneſſe of heart, and going on in unbeleef? thou muſt do it ſo or no way; for though thou beeſt a malitious perſecutor and hater of God, and goodneſſe, yet according to the tenour of the Goſpel-promiſes, if thou repenteſt and beleeveſt, thou art forgiven; now if this hardneſſe of heart, joyned with thy malice and unbeleef, be not finall, it is no infallible effect of this ſin; how wilt thou know it is finall before thou dieſt? can thou not yet repent and beleeve? ſtrive then Chriſtian, God may give thee power and call thee in at the eleventh hour, juſt at the dying hour (as the theef upon the croſs) which if he does, thou haſt unjuſtly and cruelly condemned thy ſelf, and belyed thy own ſoule. To ſum up therefore all in a word, You hear Chriſtians, beleeving yet remains your great duty; It ſtands firm, *beleeve and you ſhall be ſaved.* You have ſeen one block more thrown out of your way. I have ſhewed you this temptation or ſuggeſtion cannot hinder, where by the way you have accidentally heard ſomthing of nature of this unpardonable ſin, which being well underſtood by Chriſtians, will be enough to ſatisfie Chriſtians againſt this doubt. And from al that hath been ſaid

v. *Aug.* T. 10. E. 11. *de Verbis Domini*, p. 46. *copioſe.*

said concerning this; You may gather this description of the sin against the Holy Ghost; which is consonant to the sense of most sober and Orthodox Divines concerning it, and conteins the marrow of what most of our Divines have said concerningit, Takes it thus:

It is for a man that hath been first enlightened by the Holy Ghost.

2 With Foundamentall Gospel-truths.

3. Distinctly———Against, 1. Knowledge, And 2 Deliberation, 3. Directly, 4. Freely and wilfully, 5. Openly, 6. Maliciously. 7. Desperately. ———Without any provocation, but the corrupt wickedness of his own heart, (drawn out occasionally upon the making known of some Divine Evangelicall fundamental truths, or propagating of them, he himselfe being convinced, that they are the truths of God) In his heart to envy the credit of the truth amongst others, and out of his malice to God, whose the truth is, and to the truth, because it is true; to blaspheme, and revile the truth of God, and oppose it in others malitiously, and to blaspheme those gifts of the Holy Ghost, and that truth which he had formerly been convinced of, and received, and to set himselfe in such malicious opposition against it, as to desire and do what in him lies, to spoil the credit, and extinguish the light of the truth, and destroy the friends of it, because they are so, and in this wickednesse to go on, making a generall defection from God, and the wayes of God, and maliciously persisting in such opposition without any repentance, and finally perishing in it; despairing of Godsmercy, if at any time he should have any kinde of remorse.

A description of the sin against the holy Ghost.
1. *A subjecto*, from the degree.
A causa procreante.
From the acts of it.
From the object of it.
From the end
From the consequents of it.

This I conceive is a full description of it, which if such Christians, as ordinarily complain of this burthen, would learne, they would quickly finde their complaint groundless If any yet remain unsatisfied in it, I shall refer them to a little (but full) Book concerning this subject, called, *A Discourse of the sin against the Holy Ghost, composed*

composed by Master Bradshaw, in which they shall finde as much as can be said upon this subject. Here I shall break off.

And now I have done with answering the Scruples of those that think they ought not, and pretend they dare not, beleeve. Either,

1. Conceiting they are not enough humbled. Or,
2. Because they do not know they are elected. Or,
3. Because they conceive themselves unworthy. Or,
4. Upon a conceit they have sinned the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

SERM.

SERM. VI.

ROM. 10. 9.

And ſhalt believe with thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.

HAving in my foregoing Sermons, ſpoke ſomething toward the ſatisfaction of thoſe that *dare not beleeve*, or at leaſt think they dare not; I cõe to ſpeak to thoſe that think they do not beleeve. The complaint of the firſt was founded in their miſtake of their owne cõdition: or of the grounds of Faith. The miſtake of theſe is founded in a miſtake of the various acts, and true nature of faith; hence now ſaith many a poor ſoule.

Alas Sir! *do you take me for a beleever, you do not know what an heart I have, how full of ignorance, how full of doubting, how full of diſtruſt, &c.*

Cap. 6.

How to satisfie such Christians as have true faith in their souls: but are conceited their faith is not true.

NOw for satisfaction to such Christians, let us search out the cause of such complaints; I conceive there may be a double cause.

1. *A mistake in the nature and acts of Faith.*
2. *A misjudging of the effects of Faith.*

First, The complaints of such a soule, which yet all this time truly beleeves, may arise from a mistake concerning the nature and acts of Faith; and therefore the way to satisfie it will be rightly to inform it concerning them, and to this end, I shall but propound to such a soul to consider these two things.

1. *That there are many acts, and more degrees then one, of true saving Faith.*

2. *That true Faith is of so good a nature, that it will and may dwell with many doubtings, and weaknesses, in a poor soul.*

These two things cleared, I trust many souls will be satisfied; for commonly the mistake is grounded upon ignorance, conceiving there is no Faith, but Faith of assurance, and that Faith comes to be no Faith, if but a dram of doubting be mingled with it, &c.

Consider therefore I say, *First, That true Faith hath severall acts, and severall degrees.* A fulness of perswasion is not the least act, or degree of Faith, no not of true justifying Faith. There are notes under that Ela. There is great quarrelling concerning the nature and essence of true justifying Faith; some will have it to be a bare know-

knowledge. Thus (ſaith the Apoſtle) *The devils beleeve, and tremble:* Some will afford us a little more, and tell us that Faith conſiſts in an aſſent, but beyond this they will not ſtride; ſome in too full oppoſition to theſe, denying any certainty of perſwaſion and aſſurance to be, have deſcribed Faith by an aſſurance and full perſwaſion, which is the higheſt, and not the direct, but the reflex act of Faith, when indeed the very eſſence of juſtifying Faith lieth betwixt theſe, in an act of receiving of Chriſtian adherence to, and reliance upon Jeſus Chriſt.

To Faith we grant a knowledge is required of Gods word. But this we ſay is rather ſuppoſed to Faith, then an act of true juſtifying Faith.

Firſt, the loweſt act of faith is an *Aſſent*, a yielding in thy ſoul to the word of God, an agreement to the truth of it, *Exod.* 14. 31. *Iſrael beleeved the Lord and his ſervant* Moſes [*viz.*] gave credence and aſſent, agreed that it was juſt, and good, and true, that the Lord ſpake and relied upon the authority of him that ſpake it; So by this act of Faith, doth the beleever, when he hears the word of God revealed concerning his ſalvation, he cloſeth with it; as ſuppoſe that, *John* 3. 16. *God ſo loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever beleeves in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Or that of the Apoſtle, *There is no other name under heaven,* whereby a man may bee ſaved, *but the name of Jeſus*; or that again, *This is a faithfull ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.* Faith now doth not onely know this, but cloſeth with God in theſe truths: And ſo concerning the promiſes of ſalvation, when God ſaies, *though your ſins were as ſcarlet, I will make them as ſnow, though they were as crimſon, yet they ſhall bee white as wooll.* Faiths work now is to perſwade the ſoul to an aſſent to, and credance of the truth of this good word of God, yea and it is not every aſſent that is an act of Faith neither.

1. First, It must bee a *stedfast Assent*, The believer doth as verily beleeve the promise of God, as that he doth live; he saies in his heart, and with his whole heart: First, *The word that tels me, this is the word of an ever-living and unchangeable God*, and it is undoubtedly his Word. Secondly, *It is the word of a true and faithfull God*; The Apostle calls Gods Word, *The word of truth*. And it is the word of truth either *materially*, the matter of it is truth, or *objectively*; the object of it is truth. It hath the God of truth for the author; it is whole truth for the matter. And this the beleever gives full and stedfast credit unto.

2. Secondly, *Yea, and hee gives credit to every truth that the word of God holds out to him as truth.* Faith quickens the soule, to thirst after full discoveries of truth, and quickens the soule to receive every beame of the light of truth, that shines into it. The *Hebrews* say, *That there is not the least tittle of the Law, upon which great mountaines doe not depend.* The beleever saith, there's not the least jot in the word of God, upon which great mountaines of truth do not depend, not any leafe but the God of truth is wrapt up in. I remember that it was Gods command in the 28. *chap.* of *Deut.* That when the severall curses were read, all the people should say *Amen*; and that not to this or that curse, but at the denuntiation of every curse all the people said *Amen*; I do not read the like command when the blessings were pronounced, yet (without question) their assent was required to them as well as the other. But our hearts are ready enough to say *Amen* to blessings, and promises, but wee would not say *Amen* to threatnings and curses: Now the beleever gives assent and credence to the word of God, even there where it seemeth most to strike at his own interest, and happiness; he beleeves *all things that are written in the law, and the Prophets*, Act. 24. 14.

V. Balls Treat of Faith. 1. p.

Yea,

3.

Yea, and he gives thirdly, *a clear assent unto the word of God, and every portion of it.* He is not like him that saith *Amen* to any thing, he will give his assent to every piece of the word of God, and yet not a blind assent to any piece of it; but every truth that hee assents unto, shines into the soule with a light as cleare as the suns at high noon-day. As Christ told the woman of *Samaria*, John 4.22. *You worship you know not what, but we know what we worship.* The discourse had been very high about very great mysteries; Christ had told her of a strange gift hee would give her, *Living water*, *v.* 10. that should have a strange quality, even a quality to quench *thirst for ever*, *v.* 14. She gave some assent to this, the water pleased her taste, but it was but a blind assent, for she dream'd of such a water as might satisfie her bodily thirst, that she might no more come thither to draw. And *v.*20. When she made a confession of her Faith to Jesus Christ, that it was just of the same length and bredth of her fathers, not an inch longer nor shorter (a Faith of the same last with most now adaies) Christ told her that in the daies to come, there should be a strange kinde of worshipping the Father, *Neither at Jerusalem, nor yet in that mountaine. Yee worship saith he, you know not what; but wee know what we worship.* Many assent this day to the word of God, They assent to it that there is a Christ come into the world to save sinners, &c. None will deny this, but it is in their braines but as a dark notion, or else they have received it is a tradition of their fathers. (Our forefathers religion is a great plea in these daies) The *Samaritans* they worshipped, they gave a kinde of a blind credence, and assent to some things that were truths in the word; But alas! they worshipped they knew not what, they had no clear distinct knowledge of those truths that they made an orall profession of, and with their mouths did pretend assent to. So wicked and profane men now a-

daies give a kinde of an assent to the word of God, and to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, but it is far from the meanest, and lowest act of true Faith. When they hear or have received it from tradition, that Christ was born of a Virgin, or that Christ though eternall God yet was also perfect man, that hee died for sinners, &c. the wretches will tell you they beleeve these things; But alas! they assent not to them as clear distinct truths made out evidently and convincingly to their soules, they say they professe they worship they know not what. They understand not these things, *The naturall man receiveth not the things of God, for they are foolishnesse unto him, nor can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.* He gives his blinde assent, and perhaps will set his hand to them, but he doth but set his hand to a blank if he does; nor can it bee otherwise, for the carnall man hath nothing but the bucket of carnall reason to draw with, out of the unfadomable depth of the mysteries of salvation; and while hee hath nothing else, thus reason disputes, and cannot but dispute in his soule; if Christ be God, How could he be borne or dye? reason cannot answer these questions, therefore they seem dark to the poor blind wretch, and though he professes he gives credence to the word of God, in these particulars; Yet his assent is but a darke and forced act of his will, not a voluntary and clear act of it, closing with the truth, and embracing of it; nor can it be, because (as I have showed) his assent of his will cannot proceed from a well enlightned understanding, without the precedency of which the will is but ravished into an assent. The understanding is that which holds the candle to the will in the soule: Now the assent and credence which every true beleever gives to the word of truth, though it bee an act of the will (for it is the wils act to delight in, and close with and seale) yet it proceeds from a spiritually, and clearly enlightned

1 Cor. 2. 14.

lightned understanding, for it is the understandings office to dictate to the will: Now assent in the wicked man, is but an act of his will without any clearness in the understanding, the understanding onely presenting the truth, as a notion, or tradition, or commonly received opinion, this is far from an act of Faith, but such as the devils have. It is like the *Athenian* devotion, *Paul* coming to *Athens*, *Act.* 17. 23. found an Altar with this superscription, Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ, *To the unknown God.* Their worshiping argued some assent of the will, and the will alwaies following the dictate of the understanding. It is certaine that there was some knowledge; the truth was this, Their understanding had gathered up some generall notions of the Deity [*That there was a God, &c.*] and these might be seen by the light of nature, or heard from their forefathers, and suckt in by tradition. And it is plaine it was no more, for they ingeniously confess that the God whom they worshipped, was unknown to them; they knew that there was a God, and possibly, that this God was a spirit, and that this God must be worshipped. Naturall eyes discern all this; but it was not a cleare and distinct knowledge, and assent, they worshipped they knew not what, their Altar was to the unknown God. As many name Christians, believers at large, now a dayes mutter over their Common-prayers to their unknown God, and come to Church to worship an unknown God, onely their fathers and mothers have told them, there is a God and a Christ, and this Christ came into the world to save sinners, and they must be good Church-men and serve God, &c. But now where this is an assent in the soule (to a truth) as an act of true faith, it is out of a distinct and clear understanding. It conceives a great deal of reason, why it should believe such a truth, close with such a promise, assent to such a word, and the soule so clearely and brightly

sees

ſees the truth, that it ſets its hand and heart unto, that it wonders at the blindneſſe of carnall men, that they ſhould not ſee it as clear as they doe, but yet be blind to the things of God; when for their parts they are as clear to their ſoules as the Sunne when it ſhineth at bright noon-day. And therefore Faith is called, *Heb.* 11.1 *The evidence of things not ſeen.* The word tranſlated, evidence, is Ἔλεγχος, which ſignifies, a convincing demonſtration, it commeth of the greek verbe Ἐλέγχω, which ſignifies (ſay criticks) ſo to convince, and bring evidence and reaſon for a thing, and prove it by demonſtration ſo clearly, that no man can either deny it or object againſt it, or ſo much as pretend an objection againſt it. Such is Faith to the gracious ſoule, it perſwadeth the ſoule ſo to aſſent, that the ſoule is clearly convinced of the thing to be aſſented to: Faith hath ſo fully perſwaded the ſoule of the word, truth, promiſe, that it deſires its hand and heart, to that the ſoul is fully ſatisfied in it, and is clear in it. Though the beleeving ſoule neither doth ſee, nor expects to ſee the brightneſſe of ſublime myſteries, by the eye of carnall reaſon, yet it ſees by another eye, and ſo clearely every thing that it aſſents to, that it conceives there can be no darkneſſe in it, no reaſon and objection pretended againſt it, but frivolous and vain, and of no value. This is Faiths firſt act, ſtedfaſt, clear aſſent. Now in this the ſoul may poſſibly deceive it ſelfe.

Leigh, Critica.

The ſecound act of Faith, is the ſoules *receiving* the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. I know Divines uſually make but three acts of Faith, the one common, and not diſtinctive, of which you have heard; *viz.* the act of aſſent: the ſecond *ſpeciall, neceſſary and diſtinctive*; and that is the ſoules act of adherence or reliance, of which hereafter; this is called the direct and juſtifying act of Faith: the third not neceſſary to the life of grace, which they call the conſequent and reflex act of Faith and

and that is Assurance, or perswasion, (of which also hereafter) but I conceive the justifying act of faith, lies something below that act, which in a proper way of speaking may be called an act of Reliance, and that Reliance is an higher degree of faith, that which leads me to this, is,

1. The opinion of some Reverend Divines whom I have discourst with. 1.

2. Besides that, in my litle experience, I have found it an easier matter to convince doubting Christians, that they have received the Lord Jesus Christ, then to perswade them that they rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ. 2.

3. The denomination of the Acts of faith should (I conceive) be rather, from that which most expresseth the Nature of them, then from every ingredient into them; so that although it bee true, that there is no poor soul that hath truly received the Lord Jesus Christ, but he, or she doth truly rely upon him; yet Receiving, and relying are two things, and the *opening of the will*, to close with the Lord Jesus Christ is more fully expreſt, by the term of Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, then by the terme of *Reliance upon him*, which at least soundeth as subsequent to the other. But chiefly, 3.

4. The credit of that text of Scripture, 1 John 12. leads me to it. *To as many as receive him* (saith S. *John*) he gave power to be called the Sons of God, even to them that beleeved in his name; where observe the Evangelist expounding *Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ* by *beleeving in his name*; from whence this plainly results: *That it is an act of true saving faith for the soul, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ*; for 1. the text expounds it so, making the latter terme *Beleeve in his name*, exegeticall to the first terme *Received*. 2. Annexing adoption, which is the priviledge of saving faith to *Receiving*, to as many as Received him, saith the text, he gave power to be called the sons of God. 4.

Having given you my grounds, of making this a distinct act of faith, I proceed to open to you the Nature of it.

1. We will enquire in to the signification of the Originall word translated [Received]

2. We will enquire into the Nature of the thing.

1. For the grammaticall signification of the word here used, in the Originall ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτὸν, the Originall word is λαμβάνω, and in the verse before παρελαμβάνω, [ὁ παρέλαβόν] *Chemnitius* notes, that the Evangelist to expresse this *receiving*, useth three words in this *Chap.* 1. λαμβάνειν which signifieth to take or receive. 2. παραλαμβάνειν, which (saith he) signifies to take ones self what is offered. 3. καταλαμβάνειν which signifies to obtain and comprehend: (so he criticizeth) But to leave the signification of the word, and to come to the thing; All must know that it is a metaphoricall expression. Receiving, is an action of the hand by which we take any thing, that is laid before us, or offered unto us, it is indeed somtimes (but Metaphorically) applied to the minde. To understand therefore what it is to *Receive the Lord Jesus Christ*, it will be necessary, that we understand the Nature of that action of the hand, and when we have found what the hand doth when it receives a thing, and is offered to it, or laid before it, we shall understand what the souls doth in receiving Jesus Christ. I conceive you may comprehend the Notion of either in these three things:

Chemn'it. Har. c. 1. p. 14.

1. The hand opens:
2. It reacheth it selfe out.
3. It graspes, and takes hold of the thing tendred.

These 3. things (I conceive) will fully explain the nature of the Souls act in it's Receiving Jesus Christ.

1. The first thing in *receiving* then, *is the soule opening of it self.* As the hand opens it selfe to receive the object, so

so the gracious soul opens it self to receive Jesus Christ. A shut hand cannot receive any thing; no, the first thing, the hand must do in order to it's receiving any thing, must be to open it self. There is no soule but is naturally shut against the Lord Jesus Christ, shut against grace, dead in trespasses and sins: now when the Lord infuseth grace into the soul, the first thing he doth is this, he openeth such a soul, *Acts* 16 14. *The Lord opened the* heart of *Lydia*; till the *everlasting gate* be opened, the *King of glory* cannot enter: those words in the *Acts* expresse Gods work of saving grace upon *Lydia* heart; now the first piece of it is expresst by the Lords opening the heart: διήνοιξεν, The Lord opened her heart.

1. By *Illumination*, thus her understanding was opened: but I do not think that is all, for besides that I am of M. *Shepards* mind, that this work was wrought before.

2. The word in the Originall signifies something more; *viz.* To unlock, to set wide open; as we would set open a door wide that one might come in at it. So the Lord opened the heart of *Lydia*, though it may be she had heard before of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was a work of illumination wrought upon her understanding, and a work of conviction wrought upon her judgement, yet her *will* was lockt and shut, till now the Lord comes, and breakes open the door of her will, and indeed this is properly the opening of the *Heart*: for the will hath the command of the heart. There is many a poor wretch, in whom the Lord hath wrought the two first works, yet they have not a dram of saving grace, the Lord hath made them in some measure to be enlightened, they see something of truth, yea, and it may be there is a work of convictio n wrought upon their spirits, they may be convinced that they are miserable enough, and that there is mercy enough in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is best to fly unto him; but yet their stub-

stubborn wills are not subdued, their hearts are not yet opened, they cannot Receive Christ.

Secondly, the hand in the Receiving of a thing, doth not only open it self; but being opened, *it extends and stretcheth out it selfe to the object*, it reacheth out and applieth it selfe to that which it would have, or at least, *holds forth it selfe ready, to take a thing when it is offered*; the first (according to *Chemnitius* his note) is λαμβάνειν, the other is παραλαμβάνειν this is now another piece of the souls act in *Receiving the* Lord Jesus Christ, it holds forth it self ready, and doth reach out it self to lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It doth reach out it self to take a Christ tendered, this I take to be the soules hungring and thirsting, and longing after Christ, of which you read, *Psal.*84 2. *Psal.*63.1. *Isai.*55.v. 1. to which the blessing is pronounced, *Math* 5.6. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousnesse; for they shall be satisfied*: these unfained desires and longings, Divines usually say are the seeds of faith, or rather the first fruits of it, they are the motion of the affections upon the opening of the will, and concomitant to the least degree of saving faith; they are as the putting out of the souls hand to Christ, the application of the soul to him.

3. 3. But thirdly, the hand that receiveth any thing as it openeth, and reacheth out it selfe, and is ready so to receive, *so it doth clasp it selfe about and embrace the object*, so the soule that Receiveth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Will, 1. *Openeth*, 2. reacheth out it self by the help of the affections, so it doth lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ and embrace him; you shall find the phrase used *Heb.*11. 13. *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and embraced them*, it is true the receiving there specified is put in a kind of opposition to embrace: but you must therefore consider, that receiving there spoke of, is a receiving of fruition and enjoyment. They had not sensibly received the fulnes of the promise in the fruition

Ἀσπασάμενοι

of

of it. *The seed of the woman that should break the Serpents head*, was not to them visible, *viz.* to their bodily eies, yet they were saved by Faith, though not of sight, for they were 'Ασπασάμενοι, such as had embraced the promises, ; It is a an act of true Faith to embrace the promise. The word signifieth to salute with such a salutation as one friend salutes another ; friends when they meet, you know, salute each other, and embrace one another. It is *Beza's* note, that the word doth not only signifie to salute with a kisse, as it is often translated, but with embracing, as the fashion was in those Countries, and so is now, when dear friends meet, specially after a long absence, they kisse and embrace each other. The businesse of embracing the promise consists in the soules closing with it : when a man doth embrace a friend, he opens his armes wide, and reaching them out, he clasps them about his friend, and hugs him to him ; so the soule when it receiveth Christ, it first *opens it selfe*, is made willing, and then it reacheth out it self *with an insatiable hunger, and desire after Christ*, and then closeth with it, hugs and kisseth the promise and Jesus Christ in it : You know in kissing there is a meeting, and joyning of the friends lips ; so the soule meets Christ in embracing the promise. Christs lips and the soules lips meet, it reacheth out it selfe, and joyneth its wants and condition to the promise, and to Christ as having suitable fulness to supply its wants : In these three things I conceive consists the business of the souls receiving the Lord Jesus Christ : and this I conceive is (*Minimum quod sic*, as they say) the least degree of true saving Faith : So that this act of the soules receiving the Lord Jesus Christ may be thus described.

Est amanter salutare, amplexari & osculari. Pareus ad loc. v. Beze, annot. in Mat. 5. 47.

It is the Action of a gracious soule, whereby it opens it selfe, and being moved by an earnest desire and hunger, and longing after the Lord Jesus Christ in the promise, so reaching out it selfe, it friendly closeth with, and

embraceth, and kisseth the Lord Jesus Christ, and layeth hold on the gospel-promise for its salvation. There is a meeting of the soules lips and Christ; the soule and the promise greet like friends, and there is in the soule a willing application of it selfe to Christ, and the promise holding him forth as its sutable friend to help it in this strait. And this truly I conceive to be the lowest act of true faith in any soule; after this it goes on to rely, and at last to be perswaded and assured.

I will only here put in a word for caution, to prevent mistakes: I have used in this discourse those phrases, *The soule openeth it selfe, and Reacheth out its selfe, &c.* I would be loth to be mistaken, as if I in any thing favoured the Doctrine of the Pelagians, or any of those that are the Patrons of free will, as if I thought in the power of the soule, *virtute suâ*, by its own strength to do this or that; either to open it self or reach out it selfe, or embrace Christ, or do the least in embracing Christ; he that would allow God ninty nine parts, might have allowed him the hundredth part too in the work of faith, unless he could have minced it to less then a good thought, for to that saith the Apostle wee have no sufficiency: *The Lord opened Lydia's heart*, she had not so much as her little finger upon the key, but you must now remember, that we are not speaking of faith as it is an infused habit, the creature of God in the soule, but we are speaking of faith considered in the act, as it is a branch growing out of that root of infused grace, and this is certaine (saith *Augustine*) that wee will when we are made willing, and act when we are acted. God gives power to the soule to open it selfe, and to reach out its selfe after the Lord Jesus Christ, by insatiable desires, and hungrings and pantings after the Lord Jesus Christ, and then it doth open it selfe, and hunger and thirst, and reach out after, and embrace the promised Saviour, exhibited in the Gospel-promises.

Having

Having now opened largely to you what it is for the soul to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall shortly prove to you that this is an act of a lively justifying Faith.

I. I finde the Scripture very frequently expressing true Faith by this word *Receiving*, which (questionlesse) argues nothing more then assenting, and sounds something lesse then stedfast relying, though there bee some graines of reliance mixt with it. I shall hint you a few places, *Mat.* 11. 14. *And if you will receive it, this is Eliat which was to come.* Doubtlesse our Saviours meaning is, *if you will beleive it.* Pro. 4. 10. *Hear O my son, and receive my saying,* that is, *Beleeve my saying.* Ezek. 3. 10. *All my words receive in thine heart.* Pro. 8. 10. *Receive my instruction and not silver.* James 1. 10 *Receive the engrafted word with meekenesse.* Joh. 5. 43. *I am come in my Fathers name, and you receive me not* Col. 2. 6. *As you have therefore received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk in him.* These and many other Scriptures might be produced, in which the Holy Ghost speaks beleeving in this phrase, but I shall spare them; that Text, 1 *Joh* 1. 2. being like the sword of *Goliath*, *None to it*: in which as I noted before,

I. The Evangelist expounds his first phrase, *Receiving him*, by a second, *Beleeving in his name.* To beleeve in his name, is to beleeve in his *wisdom, righteousnesse, sanctification, and redemption,* (saith *Brentius*) Mr. *Calvin* saith, *he doth shortly note the manner of receiving Christ, to wit, when we beleeve in him. Qui non credunt Christum non recipiunt, Marlorat. in loc.* By which you see, that receiving Christ is an act of true saving Faith; and, besides, 2. The *same priviledge is annexed to receiving which is proper to beleeving*, viz. Adoption; he gave them power to be *called the sons of God*; and, *if sons*, saith the Apostle, *Rom.* 8. 17. *then heirs, and joynt heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I.

Mat. 11.14.

Pro.4.10.

Ezek.3.10.
Pro.8.10.
Jam.1.10.
Joh.5.42.

1 Joh.1.2.

I.

v. *Brentium ad loc.*
Christi recipiendi modum breviter notat, quum scilicet in eum creditur, Calv. ad loc.

Privi-

Priviledges I am ſure) which belong onely to true beleevers: I ſhall need adde no more I ſuppoſe, either to ſhew you that this receiving the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is an act of true ſaving Faith, nor yet to open to you the Nature of it.

The third Act of Faith (which wee ordinailry ſay is the very marrow and eſſence of juſtifying Faith) is *reliance, and dependency upon* Jeſus Chriſt; when the ſoule having been perſwaded of the word of truth, and aſſented to it, and having opened to him, and received him, doth hang, and depend upon it, as the word upon which it muſt live, and commits his ſoule to Chriſt, and hangs upon him as the Chriſt by which he onely can be ſaved. A learned Author hath noted ſix words in Scripture, by which the Holy Ghoſt, doth expreſſe to us, the nature and worke of beleeving, in this fiduciall Act.

Ball, *in his Treat. of Faith.*

Faith expreſt by ſix words.

1. Firſt, *Beleeving*, put in oppoſition to *fainting*, pſa. 27. 13. *I had fainted unleſs I had beleeved.*

2. Secondly, *Truſting*, put in oppoſition to *fearing*, Pſal. 78. 22. *They truſted not in his ſalvation*, they were afraid of the Canaanites.

3. Thirdly, *Betaking to, as to a caſtle*, Pſal. 2. 12. Our tranſlation readeſ, *Bleſſed be they that truſt in him*: But *Mollerus* ſaith, it ſignifies, *Protectionis cauſâ aliquò confugere, & ſe recipere (verbum appoſitum*, ſaith he) to fly to ſome place for protection, as to a caſtle in time of danger.

4. Fourthly, by a word that ſignifieth, *To lean and rely upon, as an old man that leaneth upon a ſtaffe.* 2 Chr. 16. 7, 8. *Becauſe thou didſt relye upon the Lord, he did deliver them into thy hand, verbatim* (ſay Expoſitors) becauſe thou didſt lean upon him as thy ſtaffe.

5. Fifthly, By another word, *That ſignifies to ſtay up the winde, as with a prop*, Eſa. 48. 2. *You ſtay your ſelves upon the Lord*, From fearing deſpairing, from ſinking dejections, &c.

A

A sixth word by which it is expresst, his rolling and hanging upon, as a drowning man on a boy, Psal. 37. 5. So that we may say, That the very essentiall act in which consists the marrow of justifying Faith, is this—— *When the soul being perswaded of the truth of Gods eternall word, gives a full and fixt assent, and credence to it; to every curse and threatning, as well as to every promise, and yet doth not faint, nor sinke in despair, nor drowne in sorrow, but in this apprehension of its lost and undone condition, opens and reacheth forth it selfe to the Lord Jesus Christ tendred in the Gospel, embraceth him, and runneth unto him as unto its most safe castle, and hangs upon him, committing the whole burthen of its soule unto him and staies there, leaning upon him, and the promises of life, made in him to the soule.* This is now justifying Faith, which afterwards creates in the soul a quiet resting in God, a sweet delighting in God, a stedfast hope in him, and a patient waiting for him; and at last a confident assurance of him: But this is certainly Faith, so far as is upon pain of damnation, necessary to salvation: The going out of the soule unto Christ, and the whole application of it selfe to the promises of salvation made in him and by him; and whosoever doth this sincerely, and with a faithfull heart, is *passed from death to life, and shall never perish, neither in this life, nor in the life to come; it puts its trust in him that never fails them that do so.* 6.

There is indeed a fourth Act of Faith, *Which is an act of assurance and full perswasion*, commonly called by Divines, *The reflex act of Faith.* Now this Act of Faith, *Is when the soule is fully and throughly perswaded, that Jesus Christ hath actually pardoned all its sinnes, and that it is his, and he is hers.* This is not that Act of Faith, concerning which the Apostle speakes, *Rom.* 5. 1. *Being justified by Faith, we have peace with God.* It is rather a consequent of justifying Faith that peace which flow- 4.

floweth to the soule, as a fruit, and a sweet effect of justification; and that this is not that Act of Faith which justifieth, is plain, *Because the soule must be justified before it can put forth it selfe in this Act.* This is a comfortable but not a necessary Act of Faith, and is more properly called [*fides justificati*, then *fides justificans*] the faith of justified person, then justifyng Faith: It is good and speciall justifying Faith, for the soul *heartily and sincerely to desire, and thirst and hunger after the pardon and forgiveness of its sins, through the free grace of Jesus Christ, and confidently to rest upon the promises of free remission and pardon.* But it is another pitch of Faith, and of an higher nature, *to be confidently assured, that all my sins are really and fully pardoned.* It is one thing to beleeve, that my sinnes, how many and how great soever, shall bee taken away, and that God will smile upon me, and wee shall not finally perish; And another thing to be fully assured, that now God is well pleased with us, and all our sins are blotted out; Yea, it is one thing to be perswaded, that our names are in the white book of election, and our sinnes decretally pardoned, which was from eternity, and meritoriously pardoned, which was, if ever, in Christs death, and another thing to beleeve that God hath acquitted us actually from the obligation to death, that is in them; God so pardons in time, and in the Act of Justification. It is truth, wee ought to strive after a Faith of assurance, but wee are not necessarily obliged to an assurance upon our Justification; Faith precedes actuall, and formall justification in our consciences, it is the instrument to apprehend it. Now the Gospel doth not, when it cals to mee to beleeve, oblige me to a lye: If before I am justified, I should bee tyed to beleeve I am actually justified, the Gospell would oblige mee to that in order to my justification, which I cannot upon warrantable grounds beleeve, till

till after my justification: So that wee cannot conclude, that wee have not true justifying Faith, that wee doe not beleeve, because wee cannot bee confident God hath actually and formally, in the court of our consciences, acquitted us form the guilt of our sins; for the essence of justifying Faith, doth not consist in that.

SERM.

SERM. VI.

1 COR. 13. 9.

Wee beleeve in part.

YOu may remember that I have told you, that in order to the encreasing of our Faith, we must labour to remove those blocks which hinder the progresse of Faith in the soule.

1. Some, though possibly do beleeve, yet are afraid to beleeve, and startle at a resting upon the Lord Jesus Christ; either, as you have heard, mistaking the grounds of Faith, or else mistaking their own condition.

2. Others, *conceive that they do not beleeve*, misjudging themselves, Either

1. From a mistake of the Nature and acts of Faith; Or
2. From a misjudging the effects of Faith.

Having set the soule so far on its way as to perswade it that it may go to the Lord Jesus Christ;

I came the last day, to satisfie the mistake of those that indeed have true Faith; but from a mistake concerning the nature of Faith and justifying act, conceive they have no Faith, and so hinder their own groweth.

To this end I told you I would

1. Shew you the severall acts of Faith, and shew you wherein true justifying faith consisted; this I did the last day.

2. Secondly, I promised to return and make it good to you, that such is the nature of true justifying Faith, that it will consist with many weaknesses in reference to its severall acts.

I am now come to shew what weaknesse in the severall Acts may be consistent with true saving faith. I find some Christians stumbled because of their weaknesse in knowledge, they are so ignorant they think it impossible they should have any of the light of Faith in their darke soules. I shall therefore satisfie these first, that true faith may consist with much ignorance.

CHAP. 7.

What weaknesses, in respect of knowledge, may consist with true Faith in a gracious soule, and how to satisfie the soule in this trouble.

THough some dispute knowledge to bee an act of Faith, yet we say, that it is requited to the lowest and meanest act of Faith (which is assent) rather then an act of Faith it selfe; yet in regard many Christians that strive and labour after knowledge (having wanted those meanes that others have had, either in regard of hearing the Word, or in regard of educati-

on) have not attained to what they deſire, walke yet troubled about their condition, in reſpect of their ignorance, and becauſe of this are ready to deny the grace of God in the work of true Faith in their ſoules: Give me leave a little to ſpeake ſomething by way of ſatisfaction to ſuch poor ſoules: you ſhall heare them complain in this manner.

Complaint. Alas! I beleeve? *I have yet yet ſtept the firſt ſtep of a Chriſtian. I have not ſo much as a knowledge of Gods word, I am a poor ignorant ſoule, I know not halfe the myſterious doctrines of ſalvation; can ſuch an ignorant wretch as I be a Beleever? Beſides, for what I know I am ready to deny it; ſomtimes I think this is the word and truth of God; ſometimes againe I think it is not; I fully beleeve nothing, I know nothing, I cannot read nor underſtand when I hear; many things in Scripture I know not; and for what I know, I know nothing as I ought to know it.*

Here's the complaint.

Now to ſpeak a word or two by way of comfort and ſtay to the ſoul, that labours under this trouble.

For thy knowing nothing as thou oughteſt to know, (as thou complaineſt) it is happy for thy ſoule, (if thou ſpeakeſt from thy heart,) that God hath wrought thy heart into ſo low an opinion of thy ſelfe. See what the Apoſtle ſpeaketh, 1 *Cor.*8.2. *And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know it.* But now for thy reall ignorance that thou ſo much complaineſt of, I ſhall propound a few conſiderations, which will ſhew thee how much ignorance may conſiſt with true faith in the ſoul, and then conclude all with a caution or two.

For the firſt,

Firſt, conſider, *Thou mayeſt be ignorant in many points of Religion which are fundamentall in ſome ſenſe, and yet have faith, true faith*; I think, when we ſpeake

of

of fundamentals, wee ought to distinguish; some fundamentals are absolutely necessary, our salvation stands upon them; as to beleeve, *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that he became man, a Jesus, a full Saviour, that he dyed for us that wee might live; that there is no salvation in any other but in him, and that in him there is a fulnesse of salvation, &c.* These now are those pillars upon which our salvation stands and the knowledge of which is alwaies supposed to true justifying Faith; none can bee ignorant in these, and beleeve; *For how shall they beleeve in him, of whom they have not heard?* (which was the Apostles question) but now there are other doctrines which are ordinarily called *fundamentals*, because they are such as Christians learne, even in the beginning of their conversion, such as are first taught, and laid for a foundation to build other truths upon; the doctrine of the imposition of hands, resurrection of the dead, &c. are reckoned up by the Apostle for fundamentals, *Heb.6.1,2.* Now for these it is very possible that a Christian may be ignorant of them, and yet have a true Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; The doctrine of the Trinity of the persons, *viz. That in the Deity there are three distinct manners of being, three distinct subsistences, distinguished each from other by their severall properties*; This is without question a fundamentall point of the second sort, such as is usually taught Christians as a piece of the foundation of Religion: yet I doe verily beleeve that a Christian may beleeve, and be in the state of grace, and yet not be instructed fully, but be ignorant in this. Suppose a Minister should go preach to Heathens, and preach what need men in naturall condition have of Jesus Christ, what a woefull condition they are in without him, what a readinesse there is in Christ to save them: and upon this presse faith; doe you think it is not possible, that some soule may be startled and run out of it selfe, and rest

An non habiturus est consortium cum patre, & filio & Spiritu sancto, qui nesciat ad philosophia rationem expedire quid discernat patrem à filio, quid ab utroq; Spiritum sanctum; quid interfit inter filii nativitatem è patre & Spiritus Processionè, si credo quod traditum est esse tres unius naturæ, quid opus est operosa disputatione? Erasm. in ep. ad D.D.10. Cavendiletum, in editione sua. D. Hilarii Frovin. 1523.

reſt truly upon Chriſt, and yet not bee for the preſent ſo well inſtructed as to give you an account of the Trinity of perſons? And yet without queſtion it is a truth and fundamentall truth too, *Act.* 19. *v.* 2. *Paul* came to *Epheſus*, and found certaine men that were Diſciples, *v.* 1. He asked them if they had *received the Holy Ghoſt*; they ingenuouſly confeſt, that they were ſo far from receiving the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, that they *had not ſo much as heard whether there was an Holy Ghoſt or no:* I know moſt of Expoſitors conſtrue it of the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; but for my part, I cannot ſubſcribe to their opnion, but think the latter clauſe hath more then the former, and that there is an emphaſis in their anſwer; and ſo *Iohn* 20. *v.* 9. we finde the Diſciples of Chriſt ignorant in the point of Chriſts reſurrection from the dead, and Chriſt chides his Diſciples or their ignorance in this point, *Luke* 24. *v.* 5. The very Apoſtles were ignorant in the point of Chriſts Kingdom, and rule, and dreamt of Chriſts reſtoring the temporal Kingdome to *Iſrael*, *Acts* 1. *v.* 6. This is the caſe of many a poore Chriſtian; it may be it cannot read, or it hath not lived where there hath been any faithfull, powerfull ſoule-enlightning preaching; but when Gods time comes, he brings the ſoule to hear, and it doth poſſibly hear of its poor, naturall, undone condition, and that there is none other name by which the Chriſtian may be ſaved but onely the name of Jeſus: yet this now being the work of Gods Spirit, the ſpirit carries on its owne work, and creates Faith in the ſoule, brings the ſoule to truſt and rely on Jeſus Chriſt. There may be divers fundamentall points that the ſoule all this while hath not heard a word concerning; as how many years ſometimes doth a Miniſter preach, and not directly meddle with the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c. How many weeks, and not preach the Doctrine of the Reſurrection? But there is now the condition of ſuch a Chriſtian,

The Diſciples were ignorant concerning the Father, Iohn 14. 8. *Lord ſhew us the Father, and it ſufficeth us.*

Christian, after the Spirit of God hath enlightned him, and convinced him, &c. the poore soule (that regarded not instruction before) now begins perhaps to learne to read, pray; now he heareth the word more, enquireth concerning God more, &c. and every day discovers more truths then other, to which the soule by nature was blinded; then begins Satans worke; the soule reflects upon it selfe, and begins to say, now, *woe is me! I have my work still to begin! I have made my selfe beleeve I have been a beleever so long; and alas! I have been a poore, blinde, ignorant wretch, blind to the truths of Jesus Christ, &c. how could I beleeve while I knew so little?* Yes Christian thou mayest be a Scholler though thou beest but in thy *Accidence*; there are some truths which *are the Credenda ad salutem*, the very foundation upon which salvation standeth; Now true Faith is not consistent without these: I cannot rest upon Christ, and Christ only for salvation, and yet not know that there is a Christ, nor what this Christ is, how proportionate a Saviour for mee; without question, the knowledge of the doctrine of Faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Saviour of man, what he is, what he hath done, what need we have of him, what a fulnesse there is in him; what a sufficiency of salvation for every soule that beleeveth, &c. is so much knowledge as is absolutely necessary, and without which no soule can be saved; yet this must not be understood without some caution, as I shall shew you anon: for though it be truth, such a blind soul may be enlightned so far, as truely to beleeve; yet if so, it will deny no truth, but labour and thirst after the knowledge of every truth: A man may be a Grecian, and yet not know every word in the Greek tongue, no, not every Radix: Beleevers shall not be saved by their Book.

Secondly, *A Beleever may be ignorant in many circumstantiall points of Religion, and yet be a true* Beleever;

this is clear from many examples in Scripture. *Peter* himselfe did not know he might eat those birds and beasts which to the Jews were unclean. The beleeving
Act. 11. Romanes did not know their liberty in point of holy-
Rom. 14. dayes and eating of meats first offered to Idols, which maketh the Apostle take a great deal of paines for setting
Gal. 4. Rules to strong Christians how to carry themselves in relation to their weak brethren, whose consciences
Gal. 5. were stumbled at their eating; both in the 14. Chap. of his Epistle to the *Romans*, and also in his Epistle to the *Corinthians* he harps upon the same string again. The Churches of *Galatia* and *Colosse* were ignorant about the point of Christian liberty. The indulgent Master wil not throw away the childs exercise for want of a comma: Christ rejects not the Christians Faith because it is not fringed with a knowledge in every circumstantiall in Religion: I call no truth circumstantiall (as by a slighting and neglective terme) for it is a beame of God; but as comparatively, though they bee truths to bee known, embraced, loved, practised, yet they touch not the vitals of salvation, as I may say: They are not necessary to be knowne [*ad esse*] to make a true Beleever.

3. Thirdly, *a Christian may be ignorant in the History of the Bible, and yet have true justifying Faith.* Every Scholler is not a Chronologer, nor an Historian, no more is every beleever; I may know what Christ was though I know not what *Moses* and *Aaron* were; I may know which way Christ took, to bring my soule out of darknesse into marvellous light, though I do not know which way *Moses* took to bring the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*; I may know there is but one King of Kings, though I dee not know how many Kings there were of *Israel* and *Judah*. The disciples did not know all the Prophets had spoken, *Luk.* 24. 25.

4. Fourthly, *a Christian may be a true beleever, and yet not*

not know the meaning of many places in Scripture. God would never have appointed expounders of the Law, if every Christian, *qua* Christian, were to have been a generall Commentator. That well is deep, and every one hath not a bucket to draw. There are that tell us, that the Spirit reveales the meaning of Scripture to the beleever, and would thence evince, that whoso hath the Spirit, must needs bee fit to untie every knot, and unriddle every mystery of Scripture; but every one that hath the Spirit, hath not *not the spirit of prophesie*: For those Scriptures which it is necessary in point of salvation, every beleever should know, every beleever understands the nature of them: God hath made the water shallow, that the Lambs may wade; but for those places through which the beleevers passages do not lie to Heaven, in which the Elephants may swim, God doth not require that every Lambe should sound those depths.

Fifthly, *A Christian may bee so farre ignorant in the fundamentals, as that he cannot make them out, and yet be a true beleever*; hee may be ignorant in the particulars, by which the generals are demonstrated; as for example, he may know that Christ dyed for him, and rest upon the merits of his death for eternall life, and so truly beleeve, and yet not be able to make this out, by reason of his ignorance, how Christ being God, should be capable of death, how the humane and divine Nature were conjoyned; he may know that Christ satisfied by his active obedience for his actuall sin, and yet not perfectly understand how Christ being man should be free from sin, being conceived by the Holy Ghost. The boyes Exercise may be true Latin, though hee cannot parse every word. The Disciples were beleevers, yet were ignorant concerning the Resurrection, yea, concerning Christs union with the Father, *John* 14. 4, 5, 6. The knowledge may be clear to them in the generall, though 5. Luke 24. 25.

through their infirmity and ignorance they bee not able to clear it up in the severall particulars.

6. Lastly, *They may be so far ignorant in the substantials of Religion, as that they cannot dispute them*: The faculty of beleeving, and the art of disputing are two things: I may know and beleeve that which I cannot maintaine upon dispute: It is a known speech of that female Martyr, *I cannot dispute, but I can dye for Christ*; If she had not beleeved, she would not have dyed; she could maintaine her Faith with her blood, which shee could not maintaine with her tongue: As every Scholler, so every beleever is not a disputant: It is good Logick in divinity, for the Christian to hold the conclusion, though hee knowes not what to say to the Sophisters premises: But lest now some should think and say, that I have laid Heaven a little too wide open; I must limit what I have said with two Cautions. To satisfie the poore doubting Christain in point of ignorance, I have laid downe the truth in these Conclusions, and shewed you how far it is possible that a man may be ignorant, and yet a true beleever; But,

1. First, *It must be provided hee be not content with his ignorance*, but useth the meanes to encrease knowledge, searcheth the Scripture, and heares the Word; that this ignorance proceeds meerely out of infirmity, not of wilfulnesse; otherwise this knowledge will not be sufficient. It is given as the character of unbeleevers, 2. *Pet.* 3. *That they were willingly ignorant*; We have an 1 Pet. 3. 5. High-Priest *who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for as much as hee also was compassed about with infirmity*, but for the Heb. 5. 2. wilfully ignorant, the High-Priest was to offer no Sacrifice. Know therefore Christian, that thou canst have no comfort that thou beleevest though thou beest ignorant, unlesse (appealing to thine own heart) thou canst say, I have done what I can to dispell these mists of

of ignorance, and learn the whole truth of God. Christ Jesus will take the blind man by the hand, if he beseecheth him to touch him, provided he be willing to receive his sight: And as he did not cast off the blind man that at first saw men walking like trees: So he will not cast off the Christian that at his first illumination sees divine truths like trees, not clearly, distinctly, and fully; but as he dealt with that blinde man, he left him not there, but he put his hands againe upon him, and made him see every man clearly: So if thou belongest to Christ, he will put his hands againe upon thee, and make thee see every portion of his divine truth more clearly; he will make thy dawning twilight be growing up to a mid-day of knowledge. Therefore S. *Peter* laies it as his necessary injunction upon Beleevers, *That they should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* That's the first Caution. Mar. 8. 23, 24, 25. 2 Pet. 3 10.

Secondly, this ignorance may bee consistent with true Faith in thee, provided *thou dost not deny the truth that thou dost not know*: Thou mayest have Faith, though thou dost not know what the Trinity is, or how it is; but if thou denyest the Trinity, I make a question of thy truth of Faith, or possibility of salvation. Ignorance of some truths, is not damnable, but the denyall of every truth (when revealed) is damnable; want of a clear knowledge is not damnable; but denyall of the truth, because thou canst not clearly make it out, is damnable. Speak not evill of what thou knowest not, but wait untill, and pray that God would reveale it unto thee, 1 *Tim.* 5. 8. *Hee hath denyed the Faith, and is worse then an Infidell.* There was a great difference betwixt the Disciples that had not yet learnt, and the Sadduces that denyed the Resurrection; I never yet learnt or read, that any of the latter were beleevers; the Disciples had not yet knowne the Father, nor yet the Son well, *John* 14 7,8,9. But the Apostle saies, *Hee* 2. 1 Tim 5.8.

is Antichrist that denyeth the Father and the Son. Ignorance of truth will be born with, but deny all of truth shall not. Take heed of denying the truths thou dost not know. Thus I have shewed you how true Faith may consist with weakness concerning the point of knowledge, which though it be not properly called an act of Faith, yet it is supposed in the lowest Act; and to satisfie you, I have shewed you what ignorance may be consistent with true Faith, and what not, and with what Cautions a Christian may be comforted concerning his faith, notwithstanding his ignorance in some truths, and some things not unnecessary to be known.

Joh. 14.7,8,9.

SERM.

SERM. VIII.

MAR. 9. 24.

Lord I beleeve, help thou my unbeleefe.

CHAP. 8.

Concerning theſe weakneſſes which may conſiſt with true Faith, in reſpect to its act of Aſſent, and how to comfort a ſoule under ſuch troubles.

I Shall now goe on to ſhew you what doubts a Chriſtian that truly beleeves, may have conſiſtent with his Aſſent, which I laid downe as the firſt act of Faith; for knowledge is rather ſuppoſed to Faith, then an act of it. You may remember I told you Aſſent is an act of Faith, whereby the Beleever doth firmly, fully, and clearly agree to the truth of God revealed in his Word. Now (ſaies the doubting Chriſtian) *Alas! I have no Faith, I ſcarce aſſent to the Word of*

of God at all, and if I doe, many truths there are that I cannot assent unto; and those which I doe assent to, sometimes me thinks I doe assent to them, and sometimes againe no; and when I am at the best, my assent is so misty and darke, that I almost assent to I know not what: Now I shall shew thee how much weakneſſe and doubting, in relation to this act of faith, may yet be consistent with true justifying faith in thee; I shall shew it for thy direction and establishment in these particulars.

1. First of all, *A Christian that is a true beleever, may think that he doth not assent unto the Word of God, when indeed he doth.* It is a knowne maxime in Divinity, That faith may be true without sense of faith; True Faith is one thing, and sense of Faith is another; and as it is with the other acts of faith, so it is with this also: As a man may cheat himselfe that hee doth assent, and consequently truly beleeve, though all the world may see that he doth nothing lesse by his irregular walking contrary to his professed assent: So it is as true, that a Christian may truely assent to the truth of God, though he conceits he doth not assent; we are ordinarily ill Judges of the acts of our mind, because they are secret and occult acts which traffique between the soul and Heaven in an invisible way; and therefore the truth or falshood of these acts is ordinarily discerned by the outward acts of our body, as if I hear a man professing that his soule doth assent and close with that portion of Gods Word, 1 *Cor.*6.9. *Neither fornicaters, nor Idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate persons, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdome of God*; and yet at the same time see he lives in them very sins; he shall pardon me, if I doe think that he doth not assent; and whatsoever his tongue speaks, yet his heart doth not close with it as a truth of Jesus Christ: So on the contrary, if I hear

a true Christian complaining that he cannot get his heart to close with the Word of God, and what ever the world thinks, he doth not assent to the truth; yet if I see this man fearing to sinne against God, and trembling at the threatning Word of God, and walking as even as he can set his feet, according to the directive part of Gods Word, that as *David*, hee makes the Word of God a light unto his feet, and a lanthern unto his paths; Let them think what they will, they shall give mee leave to think that they do assent unto, and close with the word of God. Take a proofe of it, *Jonas* 3. *v.* 5. *Jonas* there had preached against *Nineveh*, *Jonas* 3. *v.* 4. yet 40 daies, and *Nineveh* shall be destroyed; *v.* 5. So the people of *Nineveh* beleeved God; that is, gave a full assent and credence to the Word of God, were perswaded that that which *Jonah* spake to them in the Name of the Lord, was true: But how shall we know that? the holy Ghost tels us, it was evident by the effects, they proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth, from the greatest of them to the least; it was manifest by their actions in relation to this Sermon, studying and labouring what they could to pacifie the wrath of God before the 40 daies were come about, that they did verily think it was a word of truth that *Jonas* spake to them, and that they were perswaded: and from this assertion of the Holy Ghost we may certainly conclude, that when we see men living and acting according to the Word of God, and squaring their lives by the compasse of it, they doe believe [that is, assent unto it] as a word of truth, whether they will confesse so much or no: As when we see a man build houses, purchase lands, give great portions to his children, keep a great house, wee may conclude he is rich, though hee goes as if hee were not worth a groat, and though hee will tell you hee is not worth a groat. The heart is the seat of assent, and the throne of faith; confession is not essentiall, not sense

materiall to it. Sense of faith is comfortable, but truth and sincere reality of faith is that which is necessary: Confession of Faith with our lips brings glory to God externally; but it is the reality of faith in the heart, which brings glory to God internally: It is hee that doth assent, that doth the will of God; not he alwaies that saith he doth it or thinks hee doth it, *Mat.*21. 28. We have a parable propounded by Christ to his Disciples; it was of a man that had two sons, and he came to the first and said, *Son, go work to day in my Vineyard; he answered, and said he would not; but yet he repented and went*: And he came *to the second, and said likewise, and he answered and said, I go Sir, and went not*: *whether of the twain (saith Christ) did the will of his Father? They said unto him, The first.* To apply it. God sayes unto all men, Beleeve, and close with, and be perswaded of my truth. One saies, I do beleeve and assent; but his irregular life is such, that all the world sees he gives his tongue the lye. Another saies, Lord, I do not assent to and beleeve it; yet he dares not swerve a foot from it; which of these, doe you think, does the will of Christ? Surely the latter, though he will not say nor think that hee doth it, but suffers his tongue to give his heart the lye: indeed, sense and perswasion of faith is that which we ought to strive after, to bee perswaded that we do close with the truth of Christ; but yet many a one doth that which he doth not know he doth: the Christian is his own worst Judge, and doth, and will do more a great deale for God then he will speak of. But I hasten to the second.

2. Secondly, *A true beleever may sometimes doubt whether the Word of God be the Word of God, or no (or indeed may be tempted to do it, rather then do it)* this is that which troubles many a gracious Christian? Alas! they doe not beleeve the Word of God, they are troubled with many Atheisticall and blasphemous thoughts, that

that they cannot tell what to think; whether the Word be the Word of God, or onely (as Atheiſts dreame) a modell of Scripture drawne by ſome to keep mens conſciences in awe, &c. and this makes them conclude, Tuſh! I cheat my owne ſoule, to think I have Faith, when I queſtion even the principles of Chriſtianity, &c, and ſhake the foundation with one ſhake; and yet at the very ſame time, they live, cloſe to the rule of it, and it hath a ſtrict and ſevere command over their conſciences. Now this I ſay is rather a temptation, to doubt of the truth of Gods Word in their ſoules, then a reall and poſitive doubt. The Devill is very buſie in ſuch manner of temptations; yea, even Chriſt himſelfe was not without them. *Mat.* 4 6. hee had ſet Chriſt upon the pinacle of the Temple, and bid him caſt himſelfe down; for it is written, he ſhall give his Angels charge, &c. in which words I conceive, as the Devill tempted Chriſt in an unwarrantable way to reſt upon the promiſe, ſo he alſo tempted him to doubt of the truth of the Scripture: As if he ſhould have ſaid, If the Scripture be true, and you beleeve it, try a little, throw thy ſelf down, thou haſt a promiſe to catch thee, *Pſal.* 91.11. Throw thy ſelfe down, and thou ſhalt ſee now how true the Scriptures are, &c. So the Devill deales with Chriſtians often, ſets upon them to deny the Scriptures, and puts ſuch thoughts into their hearts, &c. which are but temptations, and argue not a nullity of their aſſent to the Scriptures, but an aſſault made upon their faith by Satan. But may a Chriſtian ſay, If I could know this, it were ſomething; how ſhall I know whether ſuch thoughts be the ſpawn of unbeleefe, and proceeding from an internall cauſe, my own infidells heart, or whether they be, as you ſay, meerly the temptations of Satan, and aſſaults upon my faith, I ſhall labour to tell thee briefly, if they be temptations.

First, *They are ordinarily but Diſputations, and* 1.

Queries, or determinations: Thou oftentimes hast Queries in thy soule, What should I think, are the Scriptures the Word of God or no? They have strange things in them, one would wonder they should be the Word of Truth; thou never comest positively to determine in thy soule, Tush, they are not the Word of God. God gives Satan leave to play the Opponent sometimes, to see what a Respondent the Beleever can be; but he alwaies keeps the office of the Moderator to himself, when they never go beyond a dispute in thy heart, that thou dost not determine in thy heart the contrary, nor declare with thy lips, nor practice with thy life the contrary; it is a signe they are but temptations, though they argue weakness, and thou oughtest to be troubled and humbled for them; if they were children of thy own begetting, thou wouldst nourish them better.

2. Secondly, *If they be only temptations, thou findest a striving against them.* Tell me Christian, when thou hast such an Atheisticall thought laid at the doore of thy heart, that the Scripiures are not the truth of God, what dost thou do with it? what dost thou take it, and suckle it, and rock it, and nurse it as thy own childe? Dost thou please thy selfe with such thoughts, and labour to coine arguments to maintaine and hug them? This is a note of a base heart: Or art thou impatient of it, but presently cryest out, Ah Lord! what a base heart have I? And dost thou labour to beat such thoughts out of thy heart, and pray against them, and never listen to any argument Satan would bring to tempt thee to the beleefe of it? I beleeve this is thy temper, and know if it bee, thou maiest have such thoughts and doubts, and yet be a true beleever.

3. Thirdly, *If it be not reall unbeleefe, but a meere temptation to unbeleefe, thy thoughts will not be long*, Jam. 4. 7. *Resist the Devill, and he will flee from you*: The Devill,

vill, if he be left to stand upon his own legs, is as very a coward as lives; he will come and tempt a beleever, to deny the Scriptures to be the word of truth; the beleever finds these filthy thoughts cast into his heart, he considers Arguments to resist this temptation, cryes and prayes, and sayes, I beleeve, Lord help my unbeleefe; Away goes Satan presently, will answer never an argument, but yeeld the field, and the beleevers heart is fixed presently. I mark this in 4. *Matth.* we read there of three weapons the Devill took up at Christ, *v.* 3. He tempteth him to distrust Gods providence. Christ resists this, *v.* 4. The Devill hath done with this, not a word more to say; well, hee flyes to another, *v.* 5 tempts him to presume unwarrantably upon Gods providence, and to deny the truth of the Scriptures, Christ resists this, *v.* 7. The Devell durst not reply, but leaves this too; well, hee betakes himselfe to another, *v.* 8 Christ resists this, *v.* 10. Satan hath not a word to say, but the coward quits the field, perks up and gets himself away, *v.* 13. Try thy thoughts, are they dwelling thoughts, or transient? if they abide not, they are Satans, that carries bag and baggage with them when he leaves thee.

Fourthly, *Thou maiest know if they be temptations, by thy life; thou are sometimes ready to think that the Scriptures are not the word of truth, thou canst not assent to them; but at this very time darst thou live contrary to the rule of the Scripture?* Darest thou now go and bee drunk and be unclean? for what now should keep thee in awe? Darest thou? then 'tis unbeleefe. But at this very time, if thou durst not but live according to that Word of Truth which yet thou art in doubt, whether it be the word of truth or no, say what thou will, thou dost assent unto it, and Satan would but fool thee of thy faith: Thus you have heard how a Christian may doubt, or rather be tempted to doubt sometimes, whether 4.

ther the Scriptures be the word of Truth or no, and yet have and give a true & firm assent unto it as the Word of Truth: and you have heard me giving some notes how a Christian may know, whether such thoughts proceed from a principle of unbeleefe and dissenting to the word of truth, or from the temptations of Satan; I come to the third Conclusion, which is this.

3. Thirdly, *A Christian may bee a true beleever, and yet not fully assent to some particular Truth in the Word of God:* There are many pieces of Gods Truth in Gods Word: The Word is the word of an eternall wisdome, and of a depth too deep for us (that have but narrow capacities, and finite buckets) to finde the bottome of it: Now I conceive it is not essentiall to a true beleefe and assent, that I should assent to every thing in the Word of God: nay, which of us *doe* it? The causes of this may be these:

1. *Ignorance.* I shewed you before, when I handled that point, that there may be a great deal of ignorance consisting with true faith; ignorance in point of doctrine and ignorance in circumstantials, ignorance in divers things which are not of absolute necessity to salvation: Now I conceive that assent doth alwaies imply knowledge. How shall they beleeve on him of whom they have not heard (was the Apostles question,) I conceive assenting to a particular truth, as the truth of God, doth not consist in a bare negation, but hath something positive in it: I conceive, that I cannot be said to Assent to all things from which I do not dissent; but if I assent, I doe fully agree and close with something as a truth, and it hath the atteſt of my heart. Now in this regard a Christian cannot bee properly and positively said to assent unto any truth of God which he doth not know, though it be contained in the Word of Truth, to which he doth fully and firmly assent: As for example, it was a truth that the beleeving Romans were not after

Christ

Christ was come, tied to daies and meats, it was a truth of Gods Word; yet it is clear, *Rom.* 14.4,5,6,7. &c. that they did not know, and were not convinced of this truth, and so consequently did not, could not assent unto this particular truth, though in Gods Word; yet it is clear, that they were true beleevers, and so consequently did assent unto the whole word of truth *conjunctim*, though not to every particular portion and piece of truth contained in that word *divisim*; there is a further revelation of truth for beleevers: *If any* (saith the Apostle) *be otherwise minded, God shall reveale this to him*; but till that revelation, there cannot be expected a full assent; onely thus far, The Christian that is the true beleever, doth not dissent from any truth in the Word of God, but prayes for the encrease of knowledge, that so his faith also may increase in the closing with the truth, and giving full assent unto the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3.15.

2. *It may be occasioned through weaknesse.* Possibly something may be taught from the Word of God, which is the Truth of God, that I hear, and cannot altogether and firmly assent unto, and close with for truth. As put case is be the baptizing of Infants, without question it is the truth of God, and a truth revealed in his Word, that Infants ought to be baptized, and it is a robbing of the child of its right, not to bring it to that holy Sacrament; yet through weakneſſe, some that yet do assent to the Word of God, and would galdly close with every portion of Truth revealed in it, dare not assent to this particular portion of Truth, but are grieved for their weakness in it, and desire to walke up to every portion of Truth they know in the Word; shall we say their faith is not true in any clearly revealed piece of truth, because to this they cannot declare a full assent, though even from this they do not dissent, so as to deny this to be a truth, but labour after a more clear manifestation of it? God forbid; hee

he that conceales the truth in unrighteousnesse, indeed cannot be said to beleeve; but he that to some particular portion of truth (not absolutly necessary to salvation) is a debter though weaknesse, I conceive cannot come alwaies within the censure of an infidell: 'Tis one thing peremptorily to deny any particular portion of truth; and another thing not to subscribe to it, and by a present assent to close with it.

4. Fourthly, *A Christian that is a true beleever, may possibly not assent to the true meaning of Scripture, yea, close with a false meaning in this or that particular place.* Beleevers judgments are not all of a Last, and many a one that doth fully and firmly assent to every tittle of Gods Word, doth not, cannot alwaies subscribe to the judgment of this or that man, or to the ordinarily received opinion of godly men concerning such or such a portion of Scripture. Scripture is very deep, who can finde it out? and though the Holy-Ghost hath left some shallows that the meanest Christian may wade through, yet there are also some depths which are past finding out; places, about which the learned in the World have posed themselves: Wee see it an ordinary experience even in the daies wherein we live, such or such an Exposition hath been received almost of all former Writers; yet when one of us commeth to examine the grounds of such and such a sense, and to weigh the context, and compare it with other places of Scripture, though we assent to the truth (if it be one) as wrapt up in some other portions of Scripture, yet we cannot assent to it, as the truth of that place; and yet possibly it may be too, that theirs is the truth of it, and ours is the error: Every misbeleever is not an unbeleever; nay yet further, *A man may misunderstand some places of Scripture, and thereupon hold that to bee truth which is not; (so it be not in the points that are necessary and fundamentall to salvation) and yet have true Faith, and*

yeild

yeeld true assent unto the Word of God. Every particular imperfection in a righteous mans life wil not argue that a man is an unrighteous man in the generall; nor every deviation from truth, argue a man an hereticke; nor every mistake of truth, argue that a man doth not assent unto the truth of Gods Word. The Disciples did verily beleeve that Christ should have a reall Kingdome upon the face of the earth, that should break in pieces all other Kingdomes, and consume them utterly, as is clear, *Acts* 1.16 They asked of him, *Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdome to Israel?* And the mother of *Zebedees* children was speaking for Courtiers places for her sons, which was but a plain and clear mistake of that place in the 2 of *Daniel* 44. yet who durst but say they had true faith? So, many in these dayes do clearly beleeve that Christ shall reign personally here upon earth, a thousand yeeres, with his Saints (it is the Millenaries opinion) which for my part I doe not think it is true (and I think that is the opinion of the most) and I think it is a clear mistake of that place, *Revel.* 20.*v.*4 yet I would be loth to say, that one cannot assent, and truly assent to the Word of God, that runs upon this mistake; surely such an opinion is consistent with true Faith: indeed if a man doth not fully assent to those truths revealed in Scripture that hold the foundation of faith firme and stedfast, then you may suspect the truth of his pretended Faith. I come to the last Conclusion.

Acts.1.6.

Dan.2.44.

Rev 20.4. and other places.

5.

Fifthly, *A Christian may truly beleeve, and truly and clearly assent unto the truth of God, though he cannot in all things give a clear evidence for his assent.* This is that which puzleth many a Christian: *Alas! I cannot clearly discerne the truth of God in his Word, I may think I assent, but can I be said to assent to that which I cannot clearly see, and comprehend, and make out?* Yes, without question: there are but very few truths of God which

the Christian hath a cleare and full sight of, and gives a clear assent unto; for a clearness of assent must proceed from a clearness of knowledge. Now a truth may be clear to mans soul two waies:

1. *To the eye of his Reason.*
2. *To the eye of his Faith.*

There are some truths which are clear even to the naturall man, to the eye of his reason, as that there is a God; that wee are all gone astray from the waies of God, in which wee were first set; to these even the carnall man may give a clear attest, for he sees a great deale of reason that demonstrates these and such like Truths unto him: But now there are some truths, which to the eye of Reason are as dark as midnight, as Christs assuming the humane nature, and the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the sublime Doctrine of Christs union with the soul, &c. Now these also in some manner are cleer to the spirituall mans eye of Faith, in regard that he doth beleeve the Word of God, & that so plainly holds out these divine Truths it is clear to him that they are Truths, hee sees a great deal of reason for him to beleeve contrary to reason; but yet when hee comes to think how should these things bee, and so puzle his faith with reason, he doth not clearly then see that upon a particular enquiry, which in a generall notion seemed very clear unto him; as in particular, that Truth concerning the spirituall and reall union betwixt Jesus Christ and the soule, the true Beleever thinks hee sees it very clearly, and beleevs it very stedfastly, while he only considers the ὅτι of it, and looks upon it as it is a truth; but now when hee comes to consider how should this be there, that knowledge which seemed clear before, appeares very dark and misty; and so concerning assent which followes the knowledge of any truth. I remember a passage of a reverend Divine of our own, "There "is a manifestation of things by reason, and by revela-

tion;

" tion; an evidence direct, and not direct; an evidence " direct, and by consequence; an evidence of the thing " in it selfe, and by the effect; matters of faith are ma- " nifest by revelation, but in reason insearchable and in- comprehensible. The Divinity of the Scripture is in it selfe evident to the spirituall man; so is it that there is a providence. Other things are evident from this ground. *Ball upon earth, p.* 22. thou maiest not judge that thou hast no faith, or that thou dost not assent to the truth of God, because every truth in the Scripture is not in it selfe evident unto thee, so as thou canst give a clear and rationall assent unto it; it may be a clear assent to the truth in generall, though not in the particulars; there it may be dark, as in the Doctrine of the Trinity: I may be perswaded, and clearly to my thinking see that there is a Trinity, it may be a notion as clear as the Sun unto me, because I take the witnes of Gods word as a sufficient evidence to me; but yet if I wil go pose my Faith with Reason, I shall not be able from an evidence of Reason to give direct assent unto that truth: It may be clear as any thing to my Faith, That Gods essentiall presence is wholly every where; yet when I come now to looke to see this with reason, how the incomprehensible God should be wholly in this or that roome, when I come neer, I have a very dark sight, and my assent is scarce cleare to this truth: Some pictures, the further you stand off them, the more you see of them; it is a clearer sight that you have of the picture at a distance then close by it: So it is with some divine truths, they seeme very clear to the Christian aloose off while he only views them with the eye of his faith, and does not come neer them with the feet of his reason; but if once he drawes neer with those earthly feet to them, they seeme very darke. And thus I have shewed you what doubts a Christian may meet with all in relation to his assent; what weaknesses may be incident to it,

and consistent with it, though arguing imperfection and weakness.

1. Hee may doubt whether he doth assent or no, and yet at that time truly assent and close with the Word of Truth.

2. Hee may doubt whether the Scriptures bee the Word of God or no, or at least may bee tempted to doubt; and there I have given some markes by which a Christian may distinguish a temptation of doubting, from a reall doubting proceeding from unbeleefe.

3. Hee may doubt concerning some particular truths in the word of God, and through ignorance or weakness not fully assent to them, and yet fully close with the Word so far as is revealed unto him.

4. Hee may doubt concerning the meaning of this or that portion of Scripture, and dissent from the (ordinarily received) truth of it, and yet truly assent to the word of God; yea, he may mistake a Scripture, and hold that as a truth from the Scripture upon his mistake, which is indeed an errour, and yet savingly assent to the Word of Truth, so it be not in necessary fundamentals.

Lastly hee may not clearly by an evidence of Reason, or a direct and distinct evidence of faith, assent unto several truths which are in the Word of God, and yet truly assent unto the Word.

Thus you see true faith may consist with much weakness; as with much imperfection and ignorance in respect of the required knowledge; so with much imperfection and doubting in relation to the act of assent: Make use of this, to see Gods goodness that will take such sacrifices at our hands; not to presume to hug these imperfections, but be alwaies striving against them, that thou dost not wilfully cherish any of them; there are many, and may bemany deficiencies in the understanding that God will pass over; but if they come to be the rebellions of the will, thou shalt know he is angry. It is said,

1 Caution, provided we alwaies strive against them.

said, *Rom.* 4. 19, 20. *That Abraham staggered not through unbeleefe; Abraham doubted through infirmity* when he lay with *Hagar*, and bid *Sarah* say she was his sister. strive against these weaknesses, and let them be thine meerly through weaknesse (if they be) not of wilfulness; meerly of infirmity, not through unbeleefe, and the Lord is mercifull, and thy faith may be true. If thou dost steadfastly assent to all the Truth of God, that is the foundation of faith, and necessary to salvation, and fully and impartially close with the whole Word of God, and every particular portion of Truth in it, when it is once clear to thee that it is a syllable of that Word of Truth and livest a life answerable to it, though for the present thou thinkest thou dost not assent, & though thou maiest be prompted sometimes to doubt of the whole Scripture, and though thou maiest doubt concerning some particular truths that are taken for truths, and are so, and concerning this or that portion of Scripture, and maiest take up that as a truth which is an errour from it, and though thou maiest not for the present by a clear evidence of reason, or a direct or distinct evidence of faith assent unto severall truths which are in the word, provided,

1. *That thou assentest unto all truths that are necessarily to be beleeved to salvation, and the foundations of Faith.*

2. *Provided thou strivest against other doubtings, and labourest to get a sense of Faith, and a strength to resist the Devils temptations, and to be convinced of every particular truth*, and of thy errour (if it be one) which thou hast taken up from some mistaken portion of Scripture, and labourest for a more cleare and distinct knowledge of every truth, that so thy assent may be more clear every day then other.

SERM.

SERM. IX

JOH. 1.12.

To as many as received him, he gave power to be called the sons of God, even to those that beleeved in his Name.

I Have shewed you what weaknesses may consist with true saving Faith in reference to its first act, *viz.* its act of assent. The second Act of Faith which I instanced in, was the *Act of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.* You have heard from this very Text of Scripture, that,

V Serm. 6. Prop. *It is an act of true Faith for the soul to receive the Lord Jesus Christ.*

I have heretofore shewed you 1. *Wherein the nature of this Act consists.* 2. *I have proved that it is an act of justifying Faith.*

The reasons why I instance in this as an intermediate act of Faith between *Assent and reliance,* I told you before and indeed one main one was: because I have found it in my little experience an easier matter to convince

vince poor wounded Chriſtians, that they have received the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, then that they rely upon the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: (though indeed there be graines of reliance muſt go into this act of redemption:) But although I have found it eaſier to convince the ſoul of the one then of the other; yet I have not found it eaſie to convince a doubting ſoul of either. But I have met with this complaint from ſome.

Alas! Sir. I have not the leaſt grain of ſaving faith in my ſoule, I have not ſo much as received the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: I am ſo far from finding, that my ſoul hath caſt it ſelfe upon the promiſe, and wholy relies upon it, and adheres to it, that I cannot finde it hath ſo much as kiſſed or imbraced the promiſe, or in any degree cloſed with it.

Now my work ſhall be, laying this for a foundation (which you have already heard ſufficiently proved.)

Prop. *That to receive the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is an act of true juſtifying faith;*

I ſay, laying this for a foundation, my work at this time ſhall be,

1. Chiefly, *To rectifie the miſtake of ſuch gracious ſoules as may apprehend they have not yet received the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel:* and

2. I ſhall *from the conſideration of the truth of the propoſition inferſomething by way of application, that may be profitable to ſuchas have indeed not received Chriſt.*

CHAP.

CHAP. 9

Something ſpoken by way of ſatisfaction to poor doubting Chriſtians that are under this miſtake, apprehending that they have not yet received the Lord Ieſus Chriſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel——— Together with ſome application directed to them who indeed have not ſo received the Lord Ieſus Chriſt.

I Shall begin with the firſt, and to that purpoſe,

1. *Conſid.* Conſider (Chriſtian!) *thou maieſt have received Chriſt, though thou doſt not know it or wilt not acknowledge it.*

1. The Sun of righteouſneſſe may have ſhined upon thee, though thou doeſt not diſcerne it in reflexions: Chriſt may bee in the houſe, and yet be hid, it may be thou doſt not know it; but yet this is ſomething hard to be ſure. Secondly, thy ſoule may have received Chriſt, and yet perhaps thou wilt not acknowledge it; gracious ſouls are modeſt and ſuſpicious: or perhaps the devill may ſpeak for them. 1. It may be *it is the modeſty of thy ſoule*; thou ſaieſt, *what am I, and what is my fathers houſe, that I ſhould think God hath brought me hitherto*, that I ſhould think I have received Jeſus Chriſt, and have power given me to be the ſon of God. As *David* ſaith, *ſeemeth it to you a ſmall thing to be ſon in law to a King?* So many Chriſtians, will deny rather then acknowledge their graces. Alas! ſeemeth it to you a ſmall thing *to receive the Lord Jeſus Chriſt?* is it nothing think you? Alas! It is a great thing, my ſoule is not acquainted with ſuch a myſtery of the Kingdome: if this be all, this is ſinfull.

2. But

2. But secondly, it may be *suspicion and over-much jealousie*; Christians are jealous creatures: the Devill perswades them Christ doth not love them, and they need not much perswasion, their own soules are apt enough, their corruptions are enough to perswade them they have not received Christ; what such a slipping, backsliding creature? should I think I have received Christ, had I received him, should I not walke closelier with him, &c? 2.

3. Possibly *the Devill speaks for them*: Ask them if they have received the Lord Jesus Christ, or let them ask themselves, the Devill answers no: they are under some heavy temptations, it is a dark time with them. And when the Devill speakes in Saints, they speake strange language; *Peter said, and sware he knew not the man*, that he had converse long enough with to have known, and cause enough to have acknowledged. Christian, thou maiest have received the Lord Jesus Christ, though thou dost not know it perfectly, though thou for the present wilt not acknowledge it thankfully. Let that be the first consideration. 3.

Secondly, Consider. *There are many waies by which a soul may be said to have received Christ, and thou maiest have received him sufficiently, though not perfectly.* I say *sufficiently*, I doe not mean so *enough*, that thou shalt not need labour and study after a more perfect receiving of him; *sufficiently*, that is enough to let thee know thou hast justifying faith, although not perfectly. I say there are many waies of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. *There is a receiving of Christ into the understanding onely*: A receiving of the notion of Christ by *common illumination*, which may have also some common and slight work upon the affections. So *Mat.* 13.20. they that received the word into *stony ground*, were such as *heard the Word, and anon received it with joy*, they received the Notion and were pleased 2. Mat. 13.20

with it, and took some delight in it.

2. 2 There is a receiving of Christ, *when the will and affections are caried out to the embracing of the righteousnesse of Jesus Christ, and the promises of Jesus Christ to close with them*: this is the receiving of Christ which I have opened to you, and this is such a receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ as I call *sufficient*, that is enough to evidence a worke of true faith in the soule. Enough to let thee know thou hast received him, so that thy soule may be encouraged comfortably to go on, and build up higher in thy spirituall building, upon this foundation, Christ being the *chiefe corner stone*, of this the Text speaks of; *To as many as received him hee gave power to be the sons of God. Thus the Gentiles received the Word of God:* Act. 11. v. 1. and the men of *Berea* Act. 17. v. 11.

Acts 11. 1.
Acts 17. 11.

3. 3. There is a *receiving of Christ, as our sanctification, a receiving of the will and law of Christ*, to walk and live in Christ and according to his prescript; so possibly may that place bee understood, *Col.* 2. 6. *As you have received Christ, so walk in him.* Now this may be more perfect or imperfect; More perfect, when the soule walks fully with God, and findes an higher power to act sanctification, or more imperfect, when it in something walks according to the rule, but is sensible of abundance of weaknesses, in many things it failes Now there is no soule that hath received the Lord Jesus Christ as its Saviour, but in some degree hath also received the Lord Jesus Christ as its refiner and sanctifier. But of stars, *some differ from others in glory.*

Col. 2. 6.

4. 4. *There is a receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ in his consolations*; a sensible receiving of Christ in reflexions of love, like *Simeons* receiving him, when he tooke him up in his armes and sang, *Now Lord let thy servant depart in place according to thy word, for my eyes have seen thy salvation.* Now I say thou maiest have received

Luke 2.

ved the Lord Jesus Christ *truly* and sufficiently to give thee a comfortable evidence of the true work of Faith in thy soule, though thou hast not yet received him so perfectly as others in his power to thy sanctification, or in the reflexions, and manifestations of his love to thy consolation.

But thirdly, to answer more positively and directly, yet to thy consolation: Consider, *if thou beest willing to receive him, thou either hast or shalt receive him*; if thy soule bee but open, the King of glory will *enter in*: when *Lydia's* heart began to *open*, the Lord Jesus Christ was coming into her soule. Christ had knocked before she opened the doore, *Rev.* 22. 13. *Whosoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely.* This is a sure rule, if thy heart be open Christ is halfe way in, *Rev.* 3. 20. *Behold I stand at the doore and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.* I pray you mark those words. 1. Christ stands at the door and knocks. 2. There is an hearing of his voice. 3. There is an opening the doore. 4 The doore being open Christ will come in to him. 5. Being come in he will sup with him, and he shall sup with him. Christ hath stood at the doore and knocks, this is vocation, he stands at the doore and knocks; ineffectually, or effectually. Many are call'd, many doores are knockt at, ah, but the doors are lockt, and barr'd and nailed up. Many have their hearts hardned, Christ cannot perswade them to open: at some doores he knocks effectually, he knocks hard to make them hear; well, *Hearing his voice* is the next, heart-hearing is that which is meant, effectuall hearing when the understanding is enlightned, and the judgement convinced effectually: All this while Christ stands but at the doore, these are but the works of his power; well, the next thing is, *The opening the doore*, the door is *the will of the creature*: if any man opens

3. Rev 22. 13. Rev. 3. 20.

the doore, (it must be by power derived from him) but if he does open the door wide ope, if he does spread out his will, and become willing to receive Christ, why then saith Christ, *I will come in*; I will justifie and sanctifie him, I will come in, to purge and cleanse him; nay, if he opens I will come in, and he shall sup with with me and I with him, and I will nourish and maintaine him, and feast him, &c.

Hark Christian, art thou willing to open the door, art thou willing to receive Christ, then thou hast received him in part, and thou shalt receive him in perfection. *He giveth to will*: It is nothing but this cursed wil of ours that hinders any of our souls from *receiving Christ*; doe not say it is any thing, I tell you once againe it is nothing but your cursed wils: It is nothing but the keeping your doores bolted, and lockt: If you would receive, you should receive. Art thou therefore willing Christian? thou that thinkest thou hast not received Christ; Art thou willing to receive him? Alas! you will say, this is to set open heavens gate at a great wideneis. Ah, but there is a manifold willingneis

1. 1. There is a *willingneis to receive him as a Priest, not as a King*; as a guest, but not an indweller.

2. 2. There is a lazy willingneis, a counterfeit willingneis, and a reall active willingneise.

1. 1. *It may be thou art willing to receive Christs righteousneise to cloath thee, but not his spirit to sanctifie thee*; to receive him as thy Priest, but not to rule over thee: Thy doore is but halfe ope, Christ will not come in upon those termes; the doore must be ope wider then so.

2. 2. *It may be thou art willing to have him come in at a guest, but not as an inhabitant*; thou art willing for a day or two to be commanded by him, but thy heart is not constant with him, thou art not willing that hee should dwel in thy heart for ever, the doore is not open yet.

3. *It*

3. *It may be thou art willing by fits*; one houre thou art willing, another thou art not; Christ cannot keep thee of a minde two daies together, thou openest the doore a little, and then clap'st it too againe: *thy goodnesse is like the morning dew*, the door is not ope enough, it must be set ope; not so ope that every puffe of wind will clap it to againe. 3.

4. *It may be thy willingnesse amounts to no more, then I care not though it be so; I could be content it were so, a lazy, counterfeit, dead willingnesse*, meerly pretended, never declared, never pursued by Acts: thou wilt not so much as put thy hand or foot to the doore to hold it ope; this will not doe (Christian!) But art thou truly willing that Jesus Christ should come in state into thy soule, so to wash thee and cleanse thee; to rule in and over thee, not for a night, but for ever? and is this thy constant temper, is it alwaies thy voice? O come Lord Jesus! Come! take possession, doe all in me, and for me, &c. And art thou not lazy but active, that thy willingness may be seen not to be pretended in hypocrisie, but in truth. Rejoyce, I say rejoyce Christian! Go on cheerfully, salvation is come to thy house. Thy willingness will be further examined in the fourth consideration. 4.

4. Consider. *If thou hast earnest hungrings and thirstings, strong desires and pantings after the Lord Jesus Christ! (thou either hast received him, or art receiving of him, and hast true justifying Faith.* 4.

The hungrings and true pantings of the soul after the Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot say they are *actuall embracings, and layings hold of the Lord Jesus Christ*; but (if they be not) they are very neer it, they are the stretchings forth of the soules hand, to lay hold and imbrace: they are not only lond signes of true habituall faith, but I may say buddings of Actuall faith: they are indeed, the *minimum quod sic* as we say, the least that can bee;

they are flowers in Christs Garden that he breaths upon *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness*: They are faith in the Cradle. Canst thou therefore say, that as the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so thy soule pants after God? Hast thou insatiate desires to be tasting of him? I say, thou either hast received him, or art receiving of him. Indeed I cannot say that earnestly, to pant and hunger after Christ is *formally to believe or to receive him*, but it is *materially*, and by *concomitancy to believe and receive him*. But you will say upon this score, it were pity any one should live that doth not receive the Lord Jesus in this manner, by desiring him, and thirsting after him. What I said before concerning Differences of willing, I may also apply here concerning Desiring: It is one thing to desire Christs Blood, another thing to desire Christs Law: One thing to desire Christ to help at a pinch, another to desire him to dwell with us: It is one thing, in a fit, to cry out with *Balaam, O that I might dye the death of the righteous!* another thing to have that constant frame of spirit that will be no more satisfied without Christ than *Rachel* was, or could be without children. It is finally one thing to pretend, another thing to have a desire; and the difference will be plaine, for who so meerly pretends will act but lazily, but who so really desires, and strongly desires, will not leave God night nor day, will not cease the doing of its utmost to obtaine. But I pass over this, and shall name but one note more.

5. Lastly therefore, *If any thing of Christ supports thee, or hath supported thee: if it bee or hath been at any time glad tidings to thy soule*, thou maiest know thou hast received Christ; if thou hast at any time embraced a Promise: though (it may be) thou maiest have let it go againe, yet I say, if at any time thou hast embraced it, if there was a meeting betwixt thy Soul and the Promise, and they closed, I say then thou hast received; yet it may

may be thou hast been in some deep dejection or horror; and thou hast been ready to make away thy selfe, or the like: what was it supported thee at such a time and kept theeup from doing of it? was it some Gospel-Tidings, of the Lord Jesus Christ, some Gospel-Promise, that thou canst now say with *David*, *Remember now thy word, upon which thou hast caused thy servant to hope!* and *I had perished in my Affliction* if such a promise had not relieved me. I say if Christ or the promises ever afforded thee support and solid comfort in an evill day, thou didst then imbrace and receive him or them; it may be since thy faith hath been ill kept, and growes worse for want of Exercise.

None ever could stay upon the Lord that did not trust in his name. But I shall adde no more in order to the satisfaction, and consolation of Christians labouring under this burthen; and indeed what I have said to this whole case may serve but as an Use of Consolation for such, as though they have, yet are ready to think they have not received the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall now proceed a little further in application of it to others.

Use. Instr. 1.

And from hence let us be instructed, *upon what sad termes every child of the Devill is damned, and such especially as live in places where the Lord Jesus Christ is preached*: they will be damned for not *Receiving Christ*, for not opening the doore of their hearts, and stretching out their hearts in desires and pantings after Christ, for not closing with an offered Christ and Promise: your damnation will not be be (Sirs) for not meriting Christ; No, God never required it at your hands. God never required you should earne him, he requires nothing but that you should receive him, and you should be willing, and your hearts should be open to let in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you should hunger and thirst after him, and close with him, not pay a penny, only take, and that freely. Ah Lord! upon what ill termes will the men of this

this Generation go down to hell? Men thinke to lay their damnation another day at Gods door; and to say, Lord, we could not beleeve, thou never electedst us, nor gavest us faith, and Christ, &c. But friend, God will let thee know that thy damnation is of thy self. Mr *Fenner* hath noted that in that Chaper of *Ezekiel*, 18. *cap.* God hath freed his three wils from the foundation of any. 1. *His secret will*, I have no pleasure (saith he) in the death of him that *dieth* 2. *His revealed will*, God saies, *Repent and turne, so shall not iniquity be your ruine.* 3. *His permissive will*; *Make* you (saith God) a new *heart* and a *new spirit*. And finally, he casts all the fault of their damnation upon their own *rebellious wils*; *why* (saith he) *will you dye O yee house of Israel?* Friends! is there any of you before me this day that have no part nor portion in the Lord Jesus Christ? For the Lords sake let what you have heard sinke upon your thoughts, *Perditio tua ex te, O Israel.* Sinners, your damnation is of your selves: if you will be saved you may. Heaven goes a begging this day, whosoever *will* let him drink of the water of life freely; it may be some of you have been great sinners, some of you old corrupted sinners: yet if *you will*, I say, if *you will*, you may drink of the water of life freely; if *you will*, you may be the *Sons of God*, Heires, joynt Heires with the Lord Jesus Christ. You that are children of wrath, if *you will*, you may be Heires of Grace. Behold Christ stands at the door and knocks: this day he knocks once more: he cries, whosoever *will*, *Whosoever hath eares to hear, let him hear*, if you will not hear, it is not because Christ wants an heart, but because you want Eares: Christ cals, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come yee to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eate: yea, come buy wine and milke without mony and without price; hearken diligently unto me, and eate that which is good, and let your soul delight it selfe in fatnesse. Incline your eare and come unto me,*

Fenners wilful impenitency, *page* 2.

me, hear and your soules shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 1, 2, 3. Remember (Sirs) *Hierusalems* might have been *gathered*, even *as a Hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, but she *would not*; if you *will not*, Christ hath washed his hands of your bloud: your *damnation is of your selves*. And Ah! think, (poor creatures!) think what bad termes these are to be damned upon: what a gnawing upon your conscience in hell another day will it bee to think, If *I would* I might have been saved; Heaven and glory might have been mine if *I would*, but now I am tormented, and shall be so for ever, because *I would not* have the Lord Jesus Christ; this makes damnation the heavier, to think, There is no more required but only to open the doore to *receive the Lord Jesus Christ*. I say it makes it the heavier as well as the juster.

Let me onely adde one branch of Application more. Is this a truth, that it is an act of true faith to *Receive the Lord Jesus Christ*? What to open the will, and with strong desires and pantings after him, is it no more but to close with him, what no more but to receive him? Then *Why will you dye, O you sinfull people*? I beseech you now *Receive the Lord Jesus Christ*. Be willing to be saved, you remember what Argument the *Syrian's* servants used to perswade him to go, *Wash in Jordan and be cleane*, 2 *King.* 5. 13. It is said, *His servants came near and spake unto him, and said, My Father! if the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he only saith unto thee, wash and be cleane.* When the Prophet first bad him wash and be cleane, *Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again, and thou shalt be cleane*, ver. 10. the man was *wroth*, and went away in a techy humour, he thought the Prophet *would have come out to him, and have stood and have called upon the name of the Lord his* *Exhor.* 2 King. 5. 13.

God, and have stroke his hand upon the place and recovered him; was not *Abana* and *Parphar* as good as *Jordan*, &c? It may be thou art going away teachy. God saies, *Receive the Lord Jesus*, and thou shalt be saved; it may be thou art going away angry; thou lookest that God should have saved thee whether thou wouldst or no; that God should have saved thee, and let thee have stood with thy hands in thy pockets: Or have sent thee only to the *Abana* and *Parphar* of thy own righteousnesse: let thee have done something, some good thing, that thou mightst have everlasting life. But let me come neare thee Christian. My friend! Poore sinner! if the Lord had required some great thing of thee, wouldst thou not have done it?

1. If the Lord had set thee upon earning Heaven by Pilgrimages, by selling all that thou hast, and giving to the poore, wouldst thou not have done it? If he had askt the bloud of thy body for the ransom of the sin of thy soule, wouldst thou not have given it? How much more when he only saith to thee, *Receive the Lord Jesus Christ*; *Take* and *live*; *Receive*, but, and thou art *Received*.

2. Behold! he *stands at the doore* and *knocks*: he is willing, he is willing, he stands at the doore and knocks: thy opening is after his knocking; he knocks this day, he cals to thee, (Ah Lord! Breake ope the doore that will not open!) thou art prevented with love, he stands at the doore, and knocks before thou canst have the least thought of opening; Hark (sinner!) heare him knocking; Turne, *turne, why will you dye* O house of Israel? hear him calling. Drunkard, vain person, Swearer, Sabbath-breaker, turne, open the doors of your hearts. *Scarlet, crimson sinners*, open, receive mercy; dost thou know he knocks, and wilt thou not open? Is he content to come downe and stand at thy gate, and canst thou bee content to let him stand without thy gate? The

King

King of Glory knocks sinner, is it not civilitie to open?

3. *Hast thou not opened to worse guests many a time.* The Devill hath knockt, and thou hast ran and opened, lusts have knockt, and thou hast opened to them; thou hast opened thy door to strangers: hast thou not been willing to break Sabbaths, to be vain, wanton, &c. hast thou kept open house for these, and is thy doore onely lockt to the Lord Jesus Christ; hast thou opened to thine enemies, and wilt thou not to thy friends? 3.

4. *Who is he that knocks?* Is it not the King of Glory; he that could break thy body and soule in pieces, hee that could damne thee as easily as save thee; that could as easily say, let such a soule be sent to hell, as let such a wretch *receive me.* Is it not the *King of Glory?* hee that is received of Saints and Angels, and received and accepted of his Father: Is it not salvation that is come to thy house? 4.

5. *How long hath he stood? and yet he stands;* doe not his locks begin to be *wet with the dew of the Night?* hath he not knockt many a day, and he hath stood many an hour knocking, calling sinner! When? ah when? how long before thou open? and yet *he stands:* The words, *Rev.* 4. 30 are ἰδοὺ ἕστηκα, *Behold I have stood;* hee hath stood, and hee doth stand, *Rom.* 2. 4. Sinner, *despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance and long-suffering? knowest thou not that the goodness of God leads thee to repentance?* Let me tell thee, *Thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.* But besides: Rev. 3. 20. Rom 2. 4.

6. *Will hee stand and knock alwaies thinkest thou?* will he be alwaies walking by the Vineyard, expecting fruit? will hee alwaies with patience walk by the Fig-tree? may not his patience at last be wearied out, and such a word slip, as *never fruit grow on thee more?* Now never Sermon work upon you, never shall my blood

bee offer'd to you more; or if you hear it shall, it shall be *a savour of death to death*; it shall be, *that seeing you may see and not perceive, and hearing you may hear and not understand, lest your soule should convert and be healed*: if you go away, and refuse to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, now it may be you may never have him offer'd more.

7. 7. *Will not bee pay the charge of a door opening to him?* he will give thee power to bee the son of God. Saint *John* was astonished at this priviledge, 1 *John* 3. 1. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestow'd upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* Is it a small thing to you saith *David* for one to be the *Son in law* to a King? But sinners! is it a small thing to you to be called the sons of the great God? *I will come in to him* (saith Christ) *Rev.* 3. 20. and sup with him, and he shall sup with me. I will feast him, strengthen, nourish him. Ah sinners, open, receive him, that you that are the children of wrath, may have power given you to become the sons of God; and if sons, then heires of grace: you that are now heires of wrath, and Hell, shall become heires of grace, and joynt-heires with Christ. Ah! but you will say what shall we do to receive him? you have heard wherein the work of receiving lies; be willing, open your hearts, be desirous of him, pant after him, thus stretch out your hands, close with him. But all this is Gods act, as to the power by which wee must doe it: God must give the soul power to open, &c. But that God may not deny thee but give thee power,

1 Ioh. 3.1.

8. 8. *Though thy will of it selfe can do nothing for him, yet let it do nothing against him, though thou canst not open thy doore, yet do not lock up thy doore.* Many poor wretches lock up their hearts against Christ, they make their hearts as an adamant, they will not hear, though thou canst not will grace, yet do not will sinne: thou

wilt

wilt sinne (doe what thou canst) but doe not will sinne; let not the full current of thy heart bee towards sinning, and rebellion against God.

2. *Be not obstinate against the means of grace*; bee willing to heare, and to attend upon God in his ordinances: this thou maiest do, be willing to receive instruction into thine eare, to incline thy heart and hear; Gods way to the heart lies through the ear, this is the hole of the door by which Christ puts in his hand. 2.

3. *Do not only hear, but when thou hast heard, do what in thee lies to obey*: that thou maiest not bee like one that looketh his naturall face in a glasse, and then goeth away and forgetteth what manner of person hee hath been. Thou canst not do all, thou canst do nothing effectually, do what thou canst; hoise up the sailes, it may be God will come with a wind. 3.

Lastly, *Cry mightily to God, and get others to cry for thee.* The blinde men in the Gospel cried, *O that they might receive their sight.* Cry thou mightily, O that I might receive my Saviour; Give me Christ, or else I die. 4.

Pray the Lord to open thy heart, to stirre up thy affections, to learne thee the mysterious art of closing with Jesus Christ in a promise: The mysterious art of saying, my Lord and my God. Art thou jealous thou shalt not be heard thy selfe; hast thou any godly friends or acquaintance? set them upon working with God for thee: art thou acquainted with Godly ministers? set them upon pleading for thee: bee not ashamed to let them know the condition of thy soule. God saies to *Abimelech*, Gen. 20. 7. concerning *Abraham*; *He is a Prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live*; and accordingly hee did. v. 17. God gives his advice to *Iob*, *Iob* 42. 8. Take you a sacrifice, *and go* to my servant *Iob*, and 1. *Offer up for your selves a burnt offering*, and then, 2. *He shall pray for you*, for him will Gen. 20. 7. v. 17. Iob 22. 8.

I *accept*. First offer up an offering for your selves, cry mightily unto God, presse hard with him in your own interest; then set Gods servants upon pleading, for them the Lord will *accept*, their prayers are his delight. Thus use all meanes to *receive the Lord Jesus Christ*: For a repeated motive take but my text.

For *to as many as receive him, he gives power to be the sons of God; even to them that beleeve in his Name.*

SERM.

SERM. X

MAT. 9. 24.

Lord I believe, Lord help my unbeliefe!

I Am shewing you what imperfections may bee in the actings of true faith in a gracious soule. I have already shewed you what weaknesses, and imperfections may incumber a soule in its act of assent. 2. What mistakes may attend a gracious soule in its act of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, and what imperfections a Christian may have in that act. I am now come to the third Act, *viz.* A Christians act of Reliance; To shew you how a Christian may be mistaken in reference to the truth of that act in his soule; which I shall doe by shewing of you what particular weaknesses, and imperfections that act of Faith is capable of, yet retaining its truth.

CHAP.

CHAP. 10.

Concerning those weaknesses which may consist with true faith in a gracious soule, in reference to its third act; viz. its act of adherence; and how to satisfie the soul that conceivs it doth not truly rely upon Christ, because it doth find that it can rely so fully and constantly as it desires, nor upon all the promises alike.

ALas! (saies a poor soule) *I cannot think that I do really rest and roll my selfe upon Jesus Christ and the promise of eternall life; when I do rest, as I think, I am ready again to think I do not, and if I be in a frame of heart one day, that I think that now I can roll my selfe upon Christ and trust his promises, another day againe I can trust nothing; if sometimes I do cleave to the Word of life as sweet and pretious, and embrace it as true, and prize Christ, and value his word above all sensuall delights whatsoever, and hunger and thirst after it and after Christ; another while againe I cleave to a sensuall good more than to spirituall promise, or an heavenly Christ; and besides, I cannot rely upon God for the fulfilling of every promise; there are some of Gods promises that I thinke I could rest upon God for fulfilling of; others againe I cannot for my selfe (though I am perswaded that they are equall words of truth with the other) trust God for, nor can I be fully perswaded that the promises do really and particular ly belong to me.* Now to satisfie the soul in this particular, I will shew you what doubtings and weaknesses may be in the soule, and yet the soule at that time may have received, and may rest, and rely, and roll it selfe upon the Lord Jesus Christ for the promises of

of salvation, and may at the save time have true saving justifying faith; this is my work by which I am to address my selfe.

Know for thy comfort.

1. First, *Thou maiest fully and wholly rely thy soul upon Jesus Christ, and yet not beleeve thou dost fully and wholly rest:* Reliance and dependance is necessary to Faith, not full perswasion of such a reliance, I mean justifying faith; Reliance is a necessary act of Faith, full perswasion of such reliance is a comfortable act of Faith; depending and relying is the act of this hand (helped by Gods spirit;) full perswasion of this reliance is more the shining of Gods face then the act of our soules; Labour more to get evidences of the truth of thy act of faith then of the degrees of it; Christ may bee in the room, and yet not seen; he may be in the midst of thy heart, and saying, *peace be to this soule*, and yet the doores of thy sense be shut: Heaven is a thing unseen and he that measureth his faith by his eye, may call an Ephah an Omer, especially if thou wilt not think that thou hast faith, unlesse thou canst see a truth of the very act, and refuse to take an evidence for thy sense from the effects of Faith: The acts of the mind are secret acts, of which (as I said before) we are very ill Judges; Resting and relying upon Christ is an act of the mind, and is a hidden and mysticall act, which we cannot weigh in any scales, to try whether it be full weight yea or no: here's the trouble of many Christians, ask them whether they rest & rely upon Jesus Christ for salvation yea or no, they will tell you, they cannot think they doe; yet they will confesse, that if they do not rely upon him, they relie upon nothing: their sinnes and duties, their morality and civility they have utterly disclaimed, and will cry out of them as monstrous clothes and filthy rags, yea, and protest that they would not, they durst not sin against Christ for a world; yea, they cannot

thinke they rest truly upon Christ for salvation; though they will confesse they desire it, and hope they do it, and they make the Law of Christ the rule of their lives, and they have a secret soule-enflaming love to Christ; but because they cannot understand the secret mysterie of the internall act, therefore they will not, they cannot flatter their soules into a faith and apprehension that they do truly beleeve, when indeed there is no act of the minde, the nature of which, and truth of which, we can discover from the knowledge of it clearly in it selfe, but must be forced to examine the truth and falshood of it by the effects; and it must bee the infinite and rare worke of God to perrwade our sense of the truth of our faith; may it not be possible, think you, to finde one that is beautifull, very beautifull, and yet all her friends shall not perswade her that she had any beauty at all? wee may have that which we will not be knowne of: The woman hath seen her face in a false glasse, or doth not know what beauty is, and therefore will not be perswaded by others mens eies to rectifie her own judgement: So it is with Beleevers, they may have a beautifull face of faith, and yet not thinke so.

2. Secondly, *A Christian may have a true faith, and truly rely upon Christ, and really think he doth not at all trust and rely upon Jesus Christ.* Sense in a Christian may not onely have a mist cast before its eyes, but have its eyes clearly put out. Suppose a man had put up a Petition to the King for some place of honour and trust, this Petition lies unanswered a great while, at last the King answers this Petition, and grants that place or dignity to him; the Subject being at a distance from the Prince, may have this place or honour conferred, and yet not know of any such matter, but verily beleeve his Petition lies like a cast paper, hath he not his dignity because he knowes it not? Christians are misjudging creatures, and too ready to suspect their owne happinesse, they may

may call their reſting and beleeving, preſumption; their faith, boldneſſe: the Hypocrite cals his droſſe Gold, his Alchymie Silver, and the ſelfe-ſuſpecting Chriſtian is as ready on the other hand, to call his Gold Braſſe, and his Silver Lead: It is a rare thing to finde a Chriſtian that will looke his gracious face in a true Glaſſe, the modeſt creature is afraid he ſhould be proud, if he ſhould look upon his beauty: Heaven may bee hid under the dark and cloudy apprehenſions of a terrible, diſmall hell: Chriſt may be ſaying in Heaven, thou art ſaved, Thou art ſaved, while thou art ſaying upon earth, O, I am damned, I am damned! The Angels may be keeping holy-day for thee there, while thou art keeping Fridaies here: there may be joy in Heaven for the ſame cauſe and at the ſame time for which and in which there may be ſorrow on earth; thou maieſt have more friends in Heaven then thou knoweſt of; Chriſt at that very time may be pleading hard at Heavens Barre for thee, while thou art thinking hee is reading an Enditement againſt thee; thou maieſt at that time have Chriſt in thy armes, when thou thinkeſt he is as far from thy ſoul as Heaven from Hell: From hence will follow,

Thirdly, *Thou maieſt queſtion and doubt whether thou doeſt truly reſt or no, and yet truly reſt; Diſputing argues weakneſſe of the act, and want of ſenſe, but not a totall want of the act.* This is leſſe then the other, but I have mentioned it, becauſe I have found this to bee the temper of many Chriſtians: pinch upon that point, aske them whether they wholly reſt and relie upon Chriſt for ſalvation; they dare not tell you they thinke they do not, nor they think they doe; but they cannot tell what to think, they know not whether they do or no; though they dare not conclude the falſhood and nullitie, yet they dare not aſſert the realitie and veritie of any act of Faith in their ſoules, they live at great incertainties, and this makes them thinke they do not 3.

beleeve. They are sure disputing is no beleeving.

To this I answer in this conclusion.

That thou maiest make a question whether thou beleevest or no, and yet truly beleeve. It is True, disputing is no beleeving; but though they bee not things of the same nature, yet they are not so ill neighbours but they may dwell under the same roofe of the soul.

1. First, *Thou maiest doubt whether thou beleevest or no, and yet beleeve*; this is not a question about the object of Faith, in which thou maiest for all this remaine unshaken, but meerlie about thy act of Faith; thus disputing, thou dost not dispute whether the promise bee true or no, but whether thou art (as thou shouldest be) perswaded of the truth of it, and dost (as thou oughtest) rest upon it for a word of truth; and yet some disputes and doubtings about the object are not inconsistent with faith, as I have shewed before. It is a soule-destroying opinion which some *Libertines* have hatched in these daies, that a Christian ought not to question the truth of his Faith: such an unbeleefe shuts not men out of Heaven, nor argues a nullitie of Faith: *Paul* was wrapt up into the third Heaven, whether in the body he could not tell, or whether out of the body he could not tell, yet without question *Paul* was wrapt up in the body, if wrapt up at all: The Beleever may bee in the like doubt concerning his Faith that *S. Paul* was concerning his rapture, and yet have reall true Faith; though wee ought not to contemne our selves in it, yet we may know for our comfort, that wee may go disputing our faith in Heaven, and many a one hath such an hot dispute with his owne soule, that his death is forced to prove the Moderator when he receives the end of his Faith, even the salvation of his soule. And thus I have shewed you in three particulars, how the Christian may doubt concerning his resting and relying upon Christ, and yet truly relie.

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1. He may question whether he truly relies or not.

2. Hee may not bee able to affirme nor think that he doth truly rely; yea further, he may through a misjudging himselfe think he doth not rely, and notwithstanding all this truly and really relie and rest. Now these kinds of misgivings may arise from severall causes: God may please for his ends to keep the soule in darknesse, to keep it humble, and to keep it in a strict way of adherence, *&c.* But I shall rather meddle with the subordinate and instrumentall causes, and assigne three or foure causes.

The first *may be blindnesse and ignorance*, there may be, yea, is a great deale of darknesse in the soule; there was a thick darknesse surprized *Adams* understanding when he fell, and this still clouds all the children of *Adam*: we are not able to discerne or judge of the nature of the internall acts of the mind; we cannot come to a certaine knowledge of them as they are in themselves, but as I said before, must judge them by the effects: the soule doth not understand what affiance is, and this makes her question whether she doth rely or no, and not think she doth, being never ready to think well of her selfe. 1.

A second cause may be the Devils temptation; such winds will make strong houses shake sometimes: It is Satans great designe to keep the soul from beleeving, and if he cannot keep the edifice of Faith from being built in the soule, yet he will keep it (if possible) from standing sure. *Luk.* 22 31. *Simon, Simon,* (saith Christ) *Satan hath desired to winnow thee like wheat*; the word signifies to shake up and down, as in a fan wheat is used, the kernels scarce ever lye still: Satan is almost alwaies shaking the Christian by the shoulders, he desires to winnow them; and as with *Job*, because he had no power over his life, he executed his power to the uttmost upon 2.

the comforts of his life: So he deales with the soul, because he hath no power over the life of Faith, therefore he will execute his power to the utmost over the soule, that it may never come to have the comfortable sense of Faith; and no wonder, if when we bring his rammes to batter, the poor mud-wall of a Christian shakes, especially considering how smooth an Orator he is to perswade, and how subtill a Sophister he is to prove: Even as it is as easie with a good Logician to make a poore simple creature beleeve, so as he cannot deny rationally that the Sun doth not shine; so it is an easie thing with the Devill to perswade the soule, that it doth not rest and relie, when indeed it doth; especially if wee consider,

3. Thirdly, *What a misgiving nature and suspicious frame there is ordinarily in the hearts of Beleevers.* They are alwaies fearing and suspecting, lest they should not do their duty, they know that in many things all sin, and they are afraid lest they should cozen and deceive themselves; now when Satan takes a flint and a steele, and fals a striking, and he meets with such a box of ready-dry'd tinder, no wonder if he quickly strikes fire; Besides,

4. *A fourth cause may be melancholy, cloudy vapours that for the present the soule is darkened with, and can see nothing with a clear sight, but is like a man in a phrenzie.*

5. And a fifth cause may be, *a Christian wilfullnesse; when the Christian will take no evidence of his Faith by the effects of it:* The best evidence that we either have, or can have of the truth of our Faith, and of our justification is the effects of Faith; now if it comes to this, that the soule will not take any evidence of the truth of the act of Faith, but only under the Broad Seale of Heaven, the apprehension and assurance and full perswasion of it, the soule may live without comfort a great while, if with *Thomas* it must see the wounds and holes;

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Here's many a good soules condition; he questions the truth of his Faith; we come to him and tell him, could there be such a hungring and thirsting after the Word that thy eare is unsatisfied with hearing, unlesse thou didst beleeve this was the word of God, and rest upon it as the Word of truth? Could there be such a care to please Christ, and a feare of offending him to be found in thy whole life and conversation, if thou didst not rely upon him for salvation? could there be such a willingnesse to part with all thy estate for Christ, and rather then thou wouldst deny him or not enjoy him in his Ordinances, if thou didst not rely upon God as thy portion? No, the soule will not look upon this as a sufficient evidence; but cries out, All this an Hypocrite may do, sanctification is imperfect, mine is Hypocrisie; No, would God seale it to me, then I would beleeve it. Now where this is found, the soule may for a long time sit in darknesse, and see no light; yea, it may be, go down to the grave in its own thoughts, like *Erasmus* hanging betwixt Heaven and Hell. But I proceed,

Fourthly, *Thou maiest not at all times trust with alike confidence, and yet at all times truly trust.* 4. The truth of trust and affiance is one thing, the degrees of it a nother; the truth of Faith never growes more or lesse, the degrees of Faith do: as the least drop of water is water, so the least dram of faith is faith, as much as the highest degree of it: This the experience of every Christian will tell you; sometimes they will say, I think if the Devill had hold of me I could trust God for Heaven. *Though he kils me* (saith *Job*) *yet I will trust in him*; that was not *Jobs* temper alwaies, and yet without question *Job* did alwaies beleeve. *Paul* was not in the same temper *Rom.* 7. that he was *Rom.* 8. 38. *Peters* crying *Master save me or else I perish*, did argue his faith was under water more then his head. *Davids* temper, *Psal.* 27. 1, 2, 3. was not the same with his temper, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1.

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In the first he would not be afraid of an Host encamping round about, no though the Host consisted of ten thousand, *Psal.*3.6 But in that place, 1 *Sam.*27.1. tels us he was afraid of one *Saul*, and that after many experiences. So a poore Christian is ready to think, O I do not truly trust and rely upon God, &c. Sometimes I think if I had not a bit of bread, nor a drop of water, yet I would not feare, my faith should be like that, *Hab.*3.17. Another time my heart is so far from it, that though I have for the present enough, yet my base heart can hardly keep from covetousnesse; sometimes I think that if God would take me away in a massacre, I should not yeeld my blood with a repining word; another time I so doubt of my interest in Christ, that I should not know how to dye upon my bed, but am crying, Lord, take me not away with the wicked. Christian, thus thou maiest be; *David*, *Psal.*3. would not be afraid of the souls going out of his body, if ten thousand swords were ready to cut out a passage for his soule out of his body. Another time hee cries, *O spare a little, give me space, that I may recover strength, before I go from hence, and be no more*; and againe, *Take me not away with the wicked.* One while *David* is troubled to see the wicked *flourish like a green Bay-tree*; and himselfe like a withered tree without a leafe: another time he is not troubled at it, but can as well trust God when he sends to *Nabal* for alms, as when he sits at his Kingly table; and yet his faith was alwaies true. Faith may be interrupted, that the pulse of it cannot alwaies beat alike, and yet while there is life; the pulse of faith beats, though by reason of some sicknes in the soule the pulse may beat more faintly and deadly than at other times: Corruptions, though they are never wholly the Christians Masters, yet they may be their Masters sometimes more than others; the mind may be more clouded with earthly thoughts, the tide of passi-

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ons may be higher, and the stream of Lusts greater: the body may bee sometimes sick and lesse active, and yet living: So the soule may bee sicke, and Faith act more weakly then at other times, yet Faith may bee alive.

Fifthly, *Thou maiest not so fully and equally relie upon some promises as upon other, and yet truly relie upon all.* It is a truth, that the true Beleever closeth with every promise; but it is also true, that the best Beleever finds a great deale of difficulty more for his soule to close with and relie upon some particular promises then upon others; and a Beleever shall find, if he be put to it, that it is harder to relie upon God for his promises for this life, then for his promises for eternall life; God hath made promises for this life, Earth is made over by indenture to the Saints as well as Heaven, *Mat.* 6.32. God hath made promises of protection in times of danger, of sufficiency in time of penury; now a Christian will find it harder, if hee be put to it for want of bread, to relie upon Gods feeding promises, then upon his promises for eternall life: O it is hard for a poor creature to trust God for bread and water. Hence comes distrusting and distracting care, hence covetousnesse and earthly mindednesse in Gods own people. And if a Christian be surrounded with swords, and be in the midst of dangers, it is a hard thing now confidently and without fear to relie upon Gods shield and buckler, and trust himself within the Castle of his providence. I am confident when *David* manifested such an evident distrust of Gods promise for protection of him, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1. he did not at all distrust God for saving of him; we read not a word of such a distrust: Now I conceive the reason of it may be two-fold. 5.

First, *Because here the flesh is sensible and concerned in it.* Dangers are obvious to sense; The eie sees swords, and trembles, it sees present dangers; but it sees 1.

not that ſpeedy reliefe which the promiſes hold out; it muſt be the ſpirituall enlightened eie of the ſoule muſt ſee that: *Eliſha's* man could ſee the mountaine about *Eliſha* full of charets and horſes; but it was only *Eliſha* himſelfe that could ſee the power of God aſſiſting and defending: *Eliſha* was faine to pray before his man could have the ſcales fall from his eies to ſee that. Now for beleeving thoſe promiſes where fleſh and ſenſe have a ſhare, and a preſent ſhare, the ſoule will find it hard; for though the fleſh will never help the ſoule in relying and reſting upon any promiſe, yet it will hinder the ſoul very much, and very often: I appeale to any of you, whether you have not found it an eaſier thing to relie upon a promiſe for ſalvation, and ſtrengthning, and quickning grace, which meerly concerns the ſoule, then when you have been in ſome bodily ſtraights, you have found it to rely upon the promiſes for ſuccour, and ſupport, and deliverance. As take a maried man, that hath a mind to the wars, poſſibly the man is a very valiant and couragious man, and values his life at as cheap a rate as any, but his wife cries, and keeps a ſtir; that if he were ſingle, though the deſigne were the ſame, and the danger the ſame, yet he finds it ten times more hard, then if wee were to go a ſingle man: So the ſoule maried to the body, is ten times more troubled to cloſe with a promiſe, and venture into thickets of a danger, by the bawlings & fearings of the fleſh, then it would be if it were to act ſingle in *ſtatu ſeparato*, or then it doth when it acts clearly for it ſelfe.

2. There is alſo a ſecond reaſon may be given of this, *viz. Becauſe wee may have more cauſe to fear Gods fulfilling his promiſes for this life, and for temporall mercies in this life, then it hath or can have, to fear his promiſes for ſpirituall mercies, and for eternall life.* The ſoule that findes an heart changed, and walkes with God, can give no reaſon why he ſhould not beleeve Gods ſpirituall pro-

promises; I meane the promises for spirituall mercies, and his promises for eternall life. What reason canst thou give why thou shouldst not beleeve Gods promises for pardon of sinnes? What? because thou art a backslider? The promise is made to such, *Hos.* 14. 4. Is it because thou hast an hard heart? the promise is made to such, *Ezek.* 11. 19, 20. But now come and aske the soule when dangers are at hand, and the soul is ready to mistrust Gods protecting promises: here the soule will tell you; Alas; I have been a backsliding creature, and though the sinnes and backslidings of Gods people be no sufficient reason to warrant the soules distrust for salvation, yet there is a great pretence of reason that the soul hath from hence, why he should a little fear Gods wonted dispensations of temporall mercies to it; for this is a sure rule, that although when God hath elected and justifyed any, hee hath made a sure promise they shall never againe be cast out of his eternal favour and love, yet for their sins hee will let them know his anger by withdrawing his temporall dispensations of love and mercy, in relation to which are the promises of protection and temporall mercies given to chasten them with the rods of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, 1 *Sam.* 7. 14, 15. See an experience of this in *David*, when hee had backsliden so far as to commit those two great sinnes of Murder and Adultery, 2 *Sam.* 12. *David* testified his repentance, and *Nathan said to him, the Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not dye*, v. 13. but the sword shall never depart from his house, v. 10 his wives should be given to be deflowred by his Neighbour, v. 11. The child should die, v. 15. Now though that *David* could not reasonably, because of this backsliding, distrust Gods promise for the pardon of his backsliding, yet he could not reasonably relie upon his promises for the blessing of his soule with temporall mercies so as before. And thence it is clear,

that a Christian may truly rest upon the promises for salvation, and pardon of his sinnes, though hee doth not so easily rest, nor so constantly, nor fully relie upon him for some particular promises of temporall mercies.

The sixth is this, *Thou maiest hang trembling upon the promises, and yet hang upon them truly.* And there is a seventh, thou maiest truly relie, and dwell upon the promises, and yet not truly appropriate and peculiarize them, and dwell on them as thy own portion, to thy apprehension; but of these afterwards.

SERM.

SERM. XI

MAR. 9. 24.

Lord I believe, help my unbelief.

I Am come now to a fifth proposition, which is this, *A Christian may relie and hang trembling upon the promise, and yet depend truly*; a trembling faith is no contradiction; faith breeds joy; and hence it is that of the Apostle, *The rejoycing of your faith*, but *David* hath bidden us, *Rejoyce with trembling*. I have seen a speech of S. *Austine*, that *such as was the degree of sollicitous fear, such was the degree of grounded assurance*. It hath been observed, that such men as have had the palsie in their heads, have lived to be aged men. A Christian I am sure, may be a true Christian, though he trembling palsie of fear be in him. It is the Apostles counsel, *Phil.* 2.12. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*: Sure I am, the work of faith must be done in working out 6.

our salvation, and this must be done with trembling. It is a false and presumptuous tenet that is by some maintained in these times, that will banish all feare and trembling from faith as utterly inconsistent with faith, and will deny any to have faith but such as have got a confident presumption, as if palsie hands were no hands; Christ was never so cruell to poor distressed soules as these are; *Ephraim exalted himselfe by speaking trembling*, *Hos.* 13.1. The woman *feared and trembled*, *Mar.* 5.33. yet Christ told her that her *faith had made her whole*. *Paul* trembling said, what wilt thou have me to doe? *Act.* 9.6. and yet I think none in their right wits will deny that the seeds of faith were growing in *Pauls* heart, though the stalk shaked. The poor drowning man that catcheth hold of some twig to save his life, he knowes he is drowned unlesse he doth it, hee therefore hangs truly, and even casts his whole weight upon it, and yet without question his heart trembles for feare, though he cannot but thinke the bough will beare him: such is the Beleever; the true Beleever is a poor wretch, that seeing himselfe undone, in a woefull condition, sinking to hell, even just sinking, only spies a branch of the root of *Jesse*, the Lord Jesus Christ in a promise: upon this he claps hold; here, saies he, I will hang; if this promise will bear the weight of a broken undone soule, then I am saved; if not, I perish; then the soul considers what burthen it hath to lay upon it, & remembers it is the heaviest weight of all its originall and actuall sinnes, this makes it tremble and fear; I doubt not but *Esther* when she went into *K. Ahashuerosh* had very good hopes that she should prevaile & did depend upon that as the last twig of hope she and her people had; yet she went in trembling, and said, *If I perish, I perish*; Now there may be severall causes alledged for this trembling.

1. First, *It may be the deep apprehension of misery that*

did

did precede; possibly the poor soule was under a spirit of bondage a long time, and shaked in pieces almost with horrour and fear; at last God opens a key-hole of mercy, and bids the soule looke through and see Christ pardoning all its sinnes, and washing it with its precious blood, and cancelling all his debts, and wiping away its teares; ; the soule at the just opening of this now stands and trembles, fearing lest the news should not be true, and terrified with those late apprehensions, not conceiving that Hell can bee so soon transformed into Heaven. When *Peter* had been in the Goale and the Prison, and without question full of carnall feates; for the next day he was to have beene brought out and have beene slaine, and the Lord just in the nick of time sent his Angel and delivered him, *Act.*12.9. *Peter* could not tell what to think of it, hee wist not that was true that was done by the Angel, but thought that he had seen a vision, he was fain to stay a while before he came to himselfe and said, *Now I know of a surety, that God hath sent his Angel to bring me out*: So it is with many a poor Beleever, he is in Goale too, God hath him in Goale, and the spirit of bondage keeps him in fetters, and to his thinking there is scarce a minute sometimes betwixt him and dea[illegible] las! death were a mercy, but he thinks that the[illegible] a haires breadth betwixt him and hell, when he lies down at night, he wonders that hee doth not awake in hell in the morning; now when under the saddest and deepest apprehensions the soule hath of eternall sinking into hell, God beyond all his expectations sends his Angel to knocke off these fetters, and bring it into the glorious liberty of the Sonnes of God, when the soule like *Peter*, is sleeping betwixt two devils, as it thinks, and is bound with two hellish chaines of terror and fear, and the spirit of bondage keeps the prison, and the Angel of the Lords consolation comes upon the soule, and the light, the glimmering glo-

v.11.

glorious light of mercy and consolation shineth into this darke hellish prison, and smites the soule, and raiseth it up, and saies, Soul, arise, thou art delivered, and makes the chaines fall off from the soule, and saies to the soule, Poor soule, gird up thy selfe, bind on thy sandals, come stand up from the dead, Christ shall give thee light: Come, come out of this Hell, cast thy garments about thee, &c. no wonder if the soule for a while, like *Peter*, will not that this is true which is done, and no wonder if it step a step or two further before its trembling be over, especially considering that these terrours seldome are at once, but by degrees abated from the soule; it passeth, like *Peter*, through the first and second ward, through one iron gate of feares, and then another street of terrours; I say, considering this, it is no great wonder if it be some while before the soule saies with *Peter*, *Now I know of a surety, now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his Angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of the Devil, and from all the expectations of Satan:* It is an ordinary thing if a man hath been drowning, and almost drowned, pulled on to the land, hee trembles and quakes at first, as if still hee were in his drowning danger, though he be on the shore; the terrors which had surprised before are not presently shaken off.

2. A Second cause may be *the regard of some holds that have already failed the soule*; Faith is, when the soule laies hold upon Jesus Christ, as the twig of salvation, and hangs upon him for life, and heaven, and happiness: Now the soule hath had many twigs failed; It is the nature of man to be timerous, and as a drowning man will catch hold upon any thing which comes next hand to save his life on; if he catcheth hold on one, and that breaks, he claps hold on another; if that againe breaks, he claps hold on a third; if that also breaks, he will claps hold on a fourth, beleeving it will hold; otherwise he would

would never lay hold upon it; yet so many having failed, he cannot but feare lest that should faile him too: So it is with a poor soule, sinne hath almost drowned him in terrour: first he claps hold upon morality and civility, resolving a sober, and honest, and vertuous life, and thinks this will beare him; well this twig breakes and will not hold; when God hath a mind to work his work upon the soule, he quickly shewes the soule that this a bruised reed, and broken staffe, the soul is plunged into a depth of horror and terror again; well, then he claps hold of another twig, and that is his duties, he prayes and fasts, and here he hangs, this shall save mee (saith hee;) this twig also breaks, the Lord shewes the poor wretch that all its righteousnesse is as a menstruous cloth, & as filthy rags in his sight, and here the soule is againe plunged in feare; at last God shewes the soule the bough of Jesus Christs Righteousnesse; the drowning, sinking, poore creature lales hold of this but with trembling, lest this should also faile, at first it feares.

A third cause may be *in regard of the promise*; Faiths work is to lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ, but now the soule doth not this immediately; but mediately. Christ doth not appear and speak out of heaven to the soule, and say, I am thy salvation, then the work of Faith would be more easie; but Christ hath given the soule many both sweet and precious promises, and these are the cords that the Lord Jesus Christ throwes out to the soule to pull it to the land with: Now the soule takes this but with trembling until it hath tryed the strength of them, in regard it conceives the promises are lyable to many ambiguities, bounded with many conditions and limitations, and the soule conceives it selfe either not within the bounds of the promise, or unable to fulfill the conditions of the promise, or that it may make a false application of the promise: And 3.

hence it is, that come to a poore drooping soule, that feares its condition, and hath a true, though a trembling hand of faith (for Faith may have the palsey) and urge the faithfulnesse of God in promising, the sureneſse of the promise once made, the unchangeable nature of God; they will tell you, they doe not a jot question this, they know *God is not man that he should lye; nor yet as the son of man that he should repent*; they know that he is both faithfull and true, but the promises they feare are not made to them; they indeed rest upon them, but whether rightly or no, God knows; they conceive that either the promises were made to particular persons, as to the Nation of the Jewes, or they are sure to the particular number of Gods elect, of which they are none, *&c.* they will tell you that indeed the promises are true, but they are conditionall, and they feare that the conditions of the promise are not fulfilled in their soules; so that the work lies another way, not so much to perswade them of the truth of the promises in generall, the cause of their trembling lies not here for feare that the promises should faile those to whom it belongs, but for fear that they should misapply and misunderstand the faithfull and true promises of God: And now although we must say concerning this trembling, *this is also our infirmity*, yet none can deny that it is an hereditary disease to the nature of man, and will be in us more or lesse, so long as any of us be in the flesh, and so long as sin remaines in our flesh, and will be especially & most in those that have lien under greatest feares and terrours, and are newly got out of them, and begin to have a little of the light of comfort glimmer upon them; even as a man that should come out of an horrid and dark dungeon where, he hath been in darkneſse, thick darkneſse, into the glaring sight of the Sun in the top of the Meridian, at the first will bee dazled and rub his eyes, and apprehend himself in some darkneſse,

neisse, though he be in the light. He that had his eyes opened *Joh.* 9. first thought he saw men like trees; and this trembling may consist with true dependance *Job* 13.15. *Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him*; the last words, *yet I will trust in him*, argued faith, and a strong faith; faith that he will trust; a strong faith, that yet he would trust; and yet whoso consider eth the first words, that *Job* apprehended himself in a danger of killing, will think easily that it was a trembling faith that *Job* there acted. And it is ordinary with the poor Christians through their infirmity to beleeve tremblingly in the beginning of their conversion; so there is also another time when trembling doth ordinarily accompany true faith in the people of God, and that is a time of desertion.

2. In time of desertion I think none will deny but Gods children have & act & must act true faith in this saving and justifying act of reliance and dependency: but I am sure this they cannot do without trembling: Such was the condition of *Job* in that place I before mentioned, *Job* 13.15. *David* did rely, and strongly rely in his time of desertion, insomuch that in his 6. *Psal.* v. 8. he speakes confidently of a thing that he beleeved for, as if it were already done, *The Lord hath heard the voyce of my weeping*: and yet whosoever readeth but the former part of that *Psalme*, will find that he was in a trembling temper, His soule was sore vexed, his bones were troubled, hee was weary with his groaning, and hee made his bed to swim with his teares, &c. Now the cause of this trembling ariseth; 2. 1.

First, *From the sense of the sin*; The sinner saith, *Ah! the promises did belong to me, but I have been a back-slider, and now what have I to do with the promises? What hath such a wretch as I to do with these filthy unclean hands of mine to lay hold upon a clean Christ?* The sense of sin strikes a deep impression upon the soule, and puts

a shaking into the heart of the soule; yet it laies hold; if Christ will not save me (saith the poor soul) sure I am nothing else can; to him I will go, and me thinks it goes as the Messengers of *Benhadad* to *Ahab*, 1 *King* 20. *Benhadad* there had wrond'd *Ahab*, and through the help of God his Army was routed, and *Benhadad* was glad to hide himselfe in one of *Ahabs* Townes in an inner Chamber, and sends to *Ahab*; his servants, *ver.* 31. said unto him, *We have heard that the Kings of the house of Israel are mercifull Kings, let us put sackcloth on our loynes, and put ropes about our heads, and go out to the King of Israel; peradventure he will save thy life*; so they did, and said, *thy servant Benhadad saies, I pray thee let me live, And he said, is he yet alive? he is my brother*; The men catcht his words, and they said, *Thy brother Benhadad*; and he said, *Go and bring him*; and accordingly he came, and *Ahab* took him up into his Chariot. So it is with the poor soule, when the soule hath fought against God by sin, the Lord overthrowes it by desertion, yet it lives, but dare not be seen so openly, it is hidden under the darke cloud of desertion, it squiks as in an inner Chamber, it is sensible how it hath deserved death, yea, ten thousand deaths; But the life of grace being yet in the soule, it saies within it self, I have heard that the King of Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, is a mercifull Christ; come therefore, I will send my Messengers of Faith and prayer, they shall put sackcloth upon their loynes, and ropes upon their heads, and go out to the Lord Jesus Christ, peradventure he will save my soule, and I shall live. Without question *Benhadads* servants went with trembling hearts, and yet relied upon this as the only means to save *Benhadad* their Master alive; So the soule sends out at such a time a trembling Faith, and trembling Prayers, and yet truly relies upon Christs mercy and favour, and the soule saies to God; *Lord! thy backsliding, revolting servant saies, Let me live,*

live, let my back-sliding be healed, let my renewed sins be yet pardoned: Christ will say, *Thou art my brother,* and take thee into the Chariot; but yet thy faith trembles, and thy prayer trembles: and indeed there is very great reason for it, if we secondly consider, *that the very essence of desertion is Gods withdrawing of his manifestative love from the soule, that the soule, though it be loved with Gods elective love in and under desertions, yet it wants the apprehensions and manifestations of his love:* Now, that which onely can keep the soule from its naturall temper of trembling, is the apprehended manifestations of Christs love to it, which being withdrawn, the soule fals a trembling againe, and yet the life of grace being not extinct, it still trusts, yea though he kils the soule, yet it trusts in him. So I have done with the sixth Proposition, That the soul may depend tremblingly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet depend truly.

I come now to the seventh and last Proposition, to shew what weaknesse and doubting may consist with true faith in the soule: that I shall do in a seventh proposition thus, *Thou mayest truly rely and depend upon the promises of God, and upon the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting salvation, and dwell upon them, and yet not be able fully and truly to appropriate and peculiarize all the promises to thy selfe, and act accordingly to them at all times.* There are *distinctions of promises,* and *distinctions of times,* from whence will arise distinctions of causes, which would be understood, to make out this certaine truth. 7.

1. *You must know that there is a distinction of promises;* the promises are many waies distinguished; there are *generall* and *particular promises, absolute & conditionall promises;* promises that *concern some particular people,* as the people of the Jews, and *particular persons,* as to *David* and *Hezekiah;* and other of the people of God, which if we should apply, we should misapply to

ourselves: I shall not meddle with all distinctions of these promises, but only with what shall conduce now to my purpose to make out this truth I have laid downe in my proposition, and so I shall distinguish of promises, two waies.

First, *They are temporall, or spirituall.*

Secondly, *They are absolute or conditionall.*

1. First, *There are temporall promises*, which are or may be called temporall, *either in respect of the matter of the promise, or circumstance of time limitted in the promise.* There are some promises that were made for a certaine time, and at the time expired were paid, and now the bonds are cancell'd, these were particular: Such were many promises made to the people of the Jews, and to particular persons amongst them; *Now these we must not looke to peculiarize*, and appropriate to our selves, they are done with.

2. Secondly, *There are temporall promises, so called in respect of the things promised*, being things temporall for the body or estate, for protection of our selves, wives, estates, families: Now for these promises, *Thou mayest not peculiarize them, and yet have true faith for salvation; salvation and heaven being not the thing promised in them*; and besides, there may be cause why thou mayest not have so good ground to rely, & confidently rest upon God for the fulfilling of these promises, as I shall shew you more when I come to handle the distinction of times, and as I shewed you the last time, in the case of *David*, 2 *Sam.* 12. But secondly, there is a second distinction of promises, I mean of *spirituall promises*, which it is our duty at all times to apply and rest upon; yet these are either *absolute* or *conditionall*: It is a note that I have before some were noted, that the promises of Gods first mercies in a way of saving grace to the soule are ordinarily absolute; *I will give, and I will give*, without any prævious conditions to bee found in the soule,

soule, as his promises of *inlightning grace*, Jer. 24. v. 7. *I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God*: And for the grace of humiliation, *Ezek.* 36. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put upon you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh*; and so *for his grace by which he convinceth*, Joh. 16. 8. *The spirit should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*: Now these promises are altogether absolute, being the free promises for dispensations of the first graces in order to a poore soules salvation. Now there are other promises of God for spirituall mercies in order to the soules salvation, which are second dispensations, and these are propounded with conditions, as the promises of heaven for power to rely on Jesus Christ, peace, assurance *&c. Isa.* 55. 1. *Mat.* 11. 29. and againe, *To him that overcommeth will I give to drink of the water of life freely*, with many such more; not as if man could fulfill these conditions in the soul, and prepare his own heart: No, we abhor that popish Doctrine, though some falsly charge us with it: But because Christ will fulfill them, before he bestowes those higher degrees of mercy and favour upon them: he will make the soule hunger and thirst before hee will let it know it shall live, and give it power to come unto him; he will make the soule weary and heavy laden with sin, before he will give the soule power to rely upon him comfortably for salvation: *He will take away the heart of stone out of the soule, and give it an heart of flesh*, before he will give it power *to walk in his statutes, and keep his ordinances, & do them*, before he will let it know that he is its God, & that it is Gods chosen vessell. And thus I have shewed you the distinction of promises, and what we shall conclude from hence for our purpose, I will shew you by & by when I have done with the distinction of times, which I come to.

Isa. 55. 1. Mat. 11. 29.

Ezek. 11. 19

The

The Soule hath its Winter and Summer, as cloudy and black daies, and its lightsome and glaring daies.

First, It hath its lightsome, Summer Sun-shine daies, when it is not conscious

1. *Of any great sin committed against knowledge*, such as *Tertullian* calls *Peccata devorantia Mentem*; Sins that swallow up heaven and salvation in the soule.

2. *When it hath no natural distempers of body*, no cloudy melancholy vapours; for the soule being to act through the body, doth somethings suffer by it: and as it is with a man that looks at the reflection of his face in a glasse, if there be a wetnesse or dust upon the glasse, he cannot see clearely: So the soule, if there be a mist or dust of melancholly, oppresses the body, the soul cannot see and act clearely.

3. Or *When the body is not under some harsh affliction*, for the soule sympathizeth with the body, and in its acting through the Organs of it, shews the affection that it hath with the bodies sufferings; and so also there are black and dark daies; for as it is Summer time with the soule, and day light, when it is not foul and darkned with desertion, & when the body is not oppressed with melancholly, or affliction, or persecution; So on the contrary, it is Winter, and a dark time with the soule, when the soule hath sinned some great sin, for which the soule looks up trembling to God, and looks upon him as an angry revengefull God, or when the body is heavy and oppressed with melancholy vapours stopping the passages of the soule, or under heavy and grievous affliction, that it is borne downe even to a back-breaking under them; even as it is with a fountaine that runs through Conduit-pipes of lead, &c. or wood, into any house, if the fountaine be dirty, and muddy in it self, dirty water comes into the house; or if the Conduit pipes through which it passeth be dirty and tainted, the water bringeth the pollution and rang or bitternesse, &c. that was in the

the pipe into the house; otherwise, if both the fountaine be cleare and sweet, and the Conduit-pipes be not stopped, nor tainted, nor dirty, then the water runs sweetly into the place to which the Pipes lead it: So it is with the soule that is the fountaine that runs into acts, but through the Conduit pipes of the body: if the pipes be stopt, or oppressed, or muddy, or cleare, such is the actings of the soule. And thus I have shewed you the distinctions both of times & promises; now I shall conclude the truth of this proposition in some fore or five Conclusions.

First of all, *particular promises must not be expected to be peculiarized*; wee may not expect that those promises which were made to the people of the Jewes in particular, should be made good to us, because they had promises to be delivered out of *Babylon* and *Egypt* at such a prefixt time; it were madnesse in us to beleeve that the Church of God should be now delivered just after 70 yeares or 400 yeares; and so likewise what promises were made to any particular persons against the Jews, as for any now to apply that promise made to *Hezekiah*, I will adde to thy life 15 yeares: I think we have a rule here in Law, *That if an inheritance be intailed by name, it cannot be translated to any other*; these promises were intailed by name; these thou canst not, nay, oughtest not to apply, they are not a portion by thy Father designed for thee. 1.

Secondly, *It may possibly be, that in some times thou mayest not be able to appropriate the temporall promises that God hath made to his children, amongst which thou art included.*

1. *In the darke time and want of penury to beleeve for bread to eat, when I see none like to come; O it is hard feeding upon Scripture leaves*: I shewed you this the last day; 'tis nothing to do it, or at least to think we do it in times of prosperity. *Habakkuks* faith, *Hab.* 3. 17.

was an hard faith, though it were a strong and precious one.

2. *In the dark time of desertions,* It is hard, as I shall shew you by and by, to apply those promises that are of neerest concernment to our salvation, much more those which are at so remote a distance.

3. *In a time when melancholy, dark, cloudy vapours of the body cast a mist before the souls eye,* and will not give it leave to act clearly.

4. *In a time when a soule hath sinned, thou mayest not fully rely and be so confident, as before.*

To peculiarize these promises; I shewed you the ground of this before, because though God hath promised that his Saints shal never eternally fal out of his favour, yet he hath and will punish his Saints for sin, with the substraction of temporall favours, as I shewed you before in the case of *David*; and I take that to be an old Antinomian error our in stead of a new truth, *That God doth not with temporall afflictions correctively punish his best servants for sin.*

5. *It doth not argue a nullity of faith and true saving faith, at any time not to be able to appropriate outward temporall promises;* for although it is our duty to rely and depend upon all the promises; yet if we through infirmity be not able to rely upon these, I conceive it doth not null the verity of our faith, salvation being not the thing promised in these.

Thirdly, *for those that are conditionall promises in darke times, the soule may not be able clearely and fully to apply them, rest upon them, and particularly apply them, and yet at the same time truly dwell and rest upon them.* What spirituall promises are made conditionally in Scripture, I have shewed you before; now it may possibly be, that even these though of great concernment to the soule, yet at all times the soul may not be able to say this promise of Heaven and glory and happinesse be-

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longs to me. Holy *Asaph* in a dark day with his soule may say, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy cleane gone for ever? Doth his promise faile for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* The reason lies not, that the soul doubts of the truth of God in his promises at all, no, it verily thinketh, that if it had fulfilled the conditions of the promises, the promises would remain to its soule as stedfast as Mount *Sion*; but it cannot see *that*: It looks upon its sins in a multiplying glass, and upon its repentance in a diminishing glass. Every mountaine of good in its selfe now seemes a Mole-hill, and every Mole-hill of sins seemeth a Mountaine unto it: Thence it is that in the soules dark day of afflictions in the soule, or in a dark day of afflictions to the body, the soules faith is weakned, it is ready to looke upon its great affliction as an evidence that it wanteth that interest in God which it should have to apply promises: It saies with *Gideon Judg.* 6. 13. when the promise saith like the Angel, *The Lord is with thee*; it answers, *O my Lord if the Lord be with me, why then is all this befaln me?* and where be all his mercies? No, the Lord hath forsaken me, & delivered me to the hand of Satan: now the soule must not take a judgement of its faith from hence, but apeale *ab anima perturbata ad animam quietam*, to a calm day in the soule againe. Psa. 77. 7, 8, 9.

Lastly, *In dark times the truly beleeving soule (though it can give no reason for it) may not be able to rest and apply the most absolute peculiar promises as its peculiar portion*; This I shall fully make out, by considering what is requisite to be in the soule that shall appropriate any promise to it selfe as its portion, upon which it will live, in which, and upon which it will dwell.

SERM. XII

MAR. 9.24

Lord I beleeve, help my unbeleefe

Am ſtill treating concerning thoſe doubts and weakneſſes, which may and often do conſiſt with true ſaving faith in a gracious ſoule. My laſt Propoſition I left imperfect; it was (as you may remember) this, That a gracious ſoul may truly rely upon the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and upon his promiſes for eternall life, and yet not be able at all times fully and truly to appropriate and pecularize all the promiſes to its ſelfe: This I ſhewed in foure propoſitions, premiſing firſt a diſtinction of promiſes, and ſecondly a diſtinction of times; my laſt Propoſition was this, *That in darke times a truly gracious ſoule may not be able to reſt upon and apply the moſt abſolute free promiſes for ſalvation, ſo far as to ſay, Theſe promiſes are my portion.*

To

To make out this, I told you I would shew you what things are requisite to be in the soule, that shall appropriate any promise to it selfe, as its particular portion, which is the worke at which then I stopt, and which I have now to take up; for here is the businesse with troubled spirits; tell them of large, absolute, free promises, as (say they) here are jewels in boxes, but these belong not to us, they are not our protion; and from hence further they conclude, that they have not any true faith, because they have not for the present a particular full power to apply these promises as plaisters to their wounded soules, and rest upon them; but yet I shall shew you the want of this doth not null our faith, and is not alwaies a negation of it.

I conceive there are three things that are requisite to be found in the soule that shall be able to apply any particular promise to it selfe as its portion.

1. *A cleare understanding of the Promise.*
2. *A cleare understanding of its own condition.*
3. *A mighty and particular working of the spirit of God upon the soule*, inabling the soule to make such particular application.

First, *There must be a cleare understanding of the promise*: the promise must appeare to the soule as a salve having a full efficacy and vertue in it for the healing of its sore, otherwise the soule can never apply it; now it may possibly be, that thy non-application of the promise may proceed from thy not understanding the vertue, or misunderstanding the intent, and end, and power, and efficacy of the promise; possibly thou mayest understand the promise to be made particular, when it is propounded generall; and such have I my selfe sometimes met with, that being under afflictions of spirit, when I have propounded a promise to them, as a salve fit for their sore, they have evaded that way; *Ah! but that promise was made to the Jews, or to such, or to such a particular*

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ticular person, it was a plaister spread for another's wound, and what have I to do to lay hold on it? Or it was not made for such a sinner as I am; not for a backeslider, not for such an hard-hearted wretch as I am, &c. and with such cavils have stood at a distance from the promise, crying, It is not meet that the childrens bread should be given to dogs; or perhaps their non-application may proceed from a misunderstanding of the matter of the promises. Now for this thou must cleare up thy understanding in the nature of the promise, *both in respect of the persons* to whom it is made, and in respect *of the matter of the promise*; and for the more cleare and full understanding of the promise, I shall give you a rule or two: The first is remarkable, I find it in a reverend Author, which I shall deliver in his words with a little limitation, thus, *Generall promises for spirituall mercies are alwayes to be applyed particularly, and particular promises for spirituall and temporall mercies are to be applied generally*; I call those generall promises which are either *made to Gods people in generall*, or concerning *spirituall things in generall*, as for example, God had made a generall promise to any that should pray toward his Temple, 1 *King.* 8.37.40. *Jehoshaphat* being after in distresse, applyed this generall promise to his owne particular condition, 1 *Chron.* 20.8, 10 and without question it was from a particular faith in this generall promise, that *Daniel* prayed with his windows open towards *Hierusalem*, *Dan.* 6.10 and so for those promises which are made to the people of God for spirituall mercies in generall, such is that promise, *Psal.* 84.11. *He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that live uprightly*, ought to be applyed for any spirituall good thing, or particular dispensation of grace. So the Apostle, *Jam.* 1.12. would have the twelve Tribes under temptations apply those generall promises of a crowne of life made unto Gods people that endure any

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1 King 8.37, 40.

1 Chr. 20.8, 10

Dan. 6.10.

Psa. 84.11.

Jam. 1.12.

any afflictions to their particular sufferings in their afflictions, and under their particular temptations. And *for those promises that are particular, they are also to be generally applyed*; as for that particular promise made to *Moses*, *Exod.* 4. *v.* 12. I will be with thy mouth & teach thee what thou shalt say; it cannot be literally applyed to every Christian particularly that at all times God will be with him in going in to *Pharaoh*, & teach him what to say (for he is not called to go in) but thus it may and ought to applyed by any particular Christian, That when God cals him to a publike service, and he finds a warrantable calling, and an inability, he may by faith particularly rely upon that promise, though not by a particular application, for assistance, just as such a one was, and in such a manner as the promise was made good to *Moses*; yet in generall for some kind of assistance in the undergoing of his works; and such a generall application Christ warrants every particular Apostle to make of that promise, as you may see, *Matth.* 13. *v.* 11. And so for that particular promise which was made to *Jacob* going to *Padan-Aram*, *Gen.* 28 15. *Behold* (saith God) *I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whithersoever thou goest* &c. A Christian cannot now particularly apply this so as to resolve upon going to *Padan-Aram*, leaning on the staffe of this promise: But as there is no warrant for such a particular application, so neither ought this to bee rejected as a promise of no concernment to a Christian, but to be generally applyed; and thus far every particular Christian may apply this, *viz.* when he is called to take an hazzardous and dangerous journey, he may apply this promise for Gods protection of him in it; and this Christ warranted to us, *Joh.* 17. 11, 20. Praying that God in keeping up their faith, would fulfill that promise which he had made to *Peter*, *Luke* 22. 32. Luk. 22. 32.

This is one rule which will help thee to understand the

the full extent and vertue of the promises, and this you see will easily divide it selfe into these particular branches.

1. *That those promises, which for spirituall mercies God hath made to his people in generall, have such vertue in them, that we may in times of need particularly apply them to our soules.* As for example, that promise, *Hosea* 14. 4. *I will heale their back-slidings, and love them freely*: It was made to the people of God in generall: Now a Christian that hath been a back-slider, may rest upon this as his proper and peculiar portion: and so for other.

2. *That those promises which are made for grace and spirituall good things in generall, may and ought to be particularly applied to our soules for any speciall good thing, or any particular dispensation of grace which our soules want*: As suppose I want faith, and I am to pray for it: praying is but suing a Bond; where shall I have a promise to ground my prayer for this dispensation of Grace? possibly I cannot find out, or call to mind any particular promise, for that dispensation of grace, yet I may apply that promise, *Psal.* 84. 11. or *Zach.* 12. 10. where God hath made a promise of all grace to his people, if he hath promised to give all, then will he give that.

3. *That those promises which are made to particular persons, and for particular occasions, or for particular mercies, though I cannot particularly apply them in that latitude, & with those particular circumstances with which they were made to them, yet I may apply the substance of them generally, to my selfe in particular, and so far they have particular vertue for me.* As suppose that I be haled to prison, and be to be called before Magistrates, & be afraid I shall not be able to carry my selfe so as to credit the cause of God, and I cannot remember any promise made to the people of God in that condition, I may so far apply that promise which was particularly

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made to *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, and [illegible] 13.3.11. as to rely upon God, either to keepe me from appearing before them, or to be with me when I am before them, &c. If I be to take a long journey, and for the present possibly cannot finde a promise in generall of Gods protection to his people, I may rely upon that particular promise made to *Jacob*, *Gen.* 28.15. thus far that God will some way or other protect me, and provide for me, &c.

A second Rule is this, *Whatsoever promises thou findest in the Word of God made to any particular people, for spirituall and soule-mercies, thou mayest apply to the still continuing Church, and any member thereof*, those promises which were made to the Jews, are good to Gentiles; those which were made to them and their seed for generall and spirituall mercies, are good to us and our seed: This the Apostle evidently makes good *Act.* 2. 39. where *Peter* speaking concerning the promise of Salvation, saies, *The Promise is to you and to you children, and unto those that are afar off* [That is, the Gentiles] *even as many as the Lord our God shall call*; and the Apostle urgeth this in severall places; he speaks of the *Corinthians*, as having, and being possessed of the Promises, 2 *Cor.* 7.1. and *Peter* writing to scattered strangers, saith, 2 *Pet.* 1.4. *To us are given many great and precious promises.* 2.

1. And this thou mayest be sure of, if thou dost but consider,

1. *That that God that hath promised is an immutable God*, he is the same God to all the faithfull, with him there is no shadow of change.

2. If thou dost but consider, *That the promises made to the Jews, were not made to them under the notion of Jews, but under the notion of Beleevers, as they were the faithfull people of God.* Indeed the promises in *Genesis* are many made to *Abraham*, and his children, and seed,

But as you have lately heard by my reverend Brother in another place, upon another subject) *Abraham* had a *starry seed*, and a *dusty seed*, according to Gods two-fold promise, *I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth*; and again, *I will make them as the stars of heaven*: Now the promise is not made to *Abrahams dusty seed*, to the bare children of *Abraham* according to the flesh, but to the *starry seed*, to all the faithfull: This was all the Jews brag: O! we are the children of *Abraham*, to us belong the Law and the Promises, and Priviledges, &c. But our Saviour Christ decideth this question, *Joh.* 8. 39. *If ye were Abrahams children, you would do the works of Abraham*; that is, if you were the children of *Abraham* according to the faith (this starry children,) those Beleevers that do the works of *Abraham*, and beleeve with the faith of *Abraham*, they are the seed of *Abraham*, to whom the promise is made; *Gal.* 3. 29. *And if ye bee Christs* [that is, such as by faith are united to Christ] *then are you Abrahams seed, and heires according to the promise.*

3. And this will be further evident if you consider in the third place, *That the whole Covenant, of which every promise is but a branch or member, was made originally and primarily with the Lord Jesus Christ for all beleevers,* Gal. 3. 16. *Gal.* 3. 9. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made: he saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.* Beza and *Piscator*, with many other Expositors would have that place understood, not of Christ personall, but of Christ mysticall, as if it had not been to be understood, that the promise was made betwixt God the Father and the person of Christ, but with the Church which is the mysticall Body of Christ: But learned Mr *Rutherford* disproves that Exposition, and proves that the promise was indeed made with the *Person* of Christ from the 17. v. for it was made with that Christ,

1. *In whom the Covenant was confirmed.*

2. *In*

2. *In whom the Nations were blessed.*

3. *In whom we receive the Promise through Faith,* verse 14.

4. *With that Christ that was made a Curse for us,* verse 13.

Which must needs be understood of a personall, not a mysticall Christ; and it plaine (saith he) from *Heb.* 1.5. compared with *Psalm.* 89.26. *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.* And secondly, *The Covenant made to the ffathers, and David and his seed, is fullfilled to Christ and his seed, Act.* 13.34.35. And thirdly, *he was the second Adam. Now as the covenant of workes was made with the first Adam for him and his seed, and he was the publick covenanting person for all his posterity; So Christ was the second Adam, and the Covenant was made with him for all those that should be his seed,* 1 *Cor.* 15.22. And fourthly, *All that is required in a Covenant, we find betwixt God and Christ; God demanded he should lay down his life, & for it he promiseth that he should see his seed, and God should give him many children,* Is. 53.10. *Christ consenteth to come and lay down his life, and do his Fathers will,* Is. 40.7. Joh. 20.8. So that whatsoever promises were made for spiritual and eternall mercies to the Jewish Church, or any members of it, are still applicable to the Church and Children of God under the New Testament; for the Promises were not made to them as Jews, but as Christians, (though not known under that name, which was first given to them at *Antioch*) that is, such as were heires of Christ, and children of Christ; for the Promise was made originally to Christ, *to him and to his heires*; that is, those which should believe in his Name: so that the promises have made so far an influence upon us as Christ hath; and they had no other upon the Jews. But yet for the true understanding of the promises, it must further be understood, that there were some promises onely made to

Ruther. Triall of Faith p. 51, 52, 53, 54.

Mr *Rutherfords ans.*

Reasons to prove the Covenant and Promises were made to Christ for us.

Acts 11.26

to the person of Christ, and not to descend to his children, as that *Phil.* 2, 9. 10, 11. and *Heb.* 1. 5. 13. and *Isa.* 53. 10. *Psal.* 110 2. *Psal.* 2. 8, 9. There are other promises which are made *To him and his*, even as there is a difference in bonds; some run onely to the person of the man, other run, *to him, his heires, executors, administrators or assignes*: And first (saith Mr *Rutherfort*) *I will be thy God*; *The mother-Promises* is made to him, *Psal.* 89. 26 *Joh.* 20. 17. and to his people too, *Jer.* 32. 38. *Zach.* 13. 9.

And *speciall promises* (secondly) are made *first to him*, & then *in proportion to us*, as grace to him is promised, and in proportion to us, *Jer.* 32. 39. *Ezek.* 36. 26, 27. *Joh.* 1. 16.

2. *Justification is promised to him* (not personall, but of his cause, as Mr *Rutherford* distinguishes) *Isa.* 50. 8. and *justification of our persons* [illegible], *Ephes.* 1. 7. *Jer.* 31. 32. 33.

3. *Victory and dominion is promised to him*, Psal. 1. 10. 12. 1 Cor. 15. 25. *and to us* Joh. 16. 1. 114 30

4. *The Kingdom and Glory is promised to him*, *Phil.* 1. 9, 10. *and to us*, Luk. 12. 32. Joh. 17. 24.

5. *For his resurrection after three dayes* Psal. 6. 10, 11, *to us after a longer time*, Joh. 11. 26. 6. 38. 39. For these things more fully I shall refer you to Mr *Rutherfords Tryall and triumph of Faith*, p. 55, 56. So that you see clearly, that whatsoever promises were made to the Jewes, either to the Church, or to the persons of the beleeving Jews, are to be applyed to us, because they were primarily and originally made with Christ, to whom we have as great a title, and in whom we have as great a share as they have. And that is the second rule to help you for the clear understanding of the promises; I will adde but one more, which together with these will meet with all mistakes which in my little experience I have met with in troubled Spirits con-

concerning the understanding of the promises.

Thirdly, that is this, *though some promises are conditional, yet none require of us a fulfilling of the conditions by our own strength.* This is that which troubles many poor soules, and is a great bar to their faith, and staves them off from applying the Promises: *Sir, I cannot fulfill the condition of the Promises; I cannot be heavy laden and weary; I cannot hunger and thirst, &c.* I told you before what promises were ordinarily [illegible] conditionally in Scripture, *viz.* Promises [illegible] in order to our salvation, as the Promises [illegible] ease, peace, which follow after vocation, [illegible] *Ho every one that thirsteth, &c. Blessed [illegible] and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,* Mat. 5. 6. Now here doth many a poor soul stand. *Alas* (saith a poor Christian) *[illegible] I perish:* You say to the soule in such a complaint, Here what Christ sayes, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you,* Mat. 11. 29. And [illegible] *that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and [illegible] hath no money, come yee, buy and eat, &c. [illegible] and come unto me; hear and your [illegible] I will make an everlasting Covenant [illegible] of David,* Isa. 55. 1, 3. And [illegible] Isa. [illegible] *Wash you, make you cleane, (pas [illegible] before mine eyes; cease to [illegible] Come now & let us reason together [illegible] as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow [illegible] they shall be as wool.* But now the Christian [illegible] understanding the nature and vertue of these promises, cannot make a particular application of them to its soul, it stands off and cannot make a particular application. *Alas* (saith the Christian) *[illegible] of a wearinesse, and an heavy load, of hungring and thirsting, of coming, of washing and cleansing, of putting away the evil of my doings, of ceasing to do evil, and learning to*

3.

Isa. 55. 1, 2.
Mat. 11. 29.

to do well: Hard sayings, who can heare them? I cannot get my heart to hunger and thirst, I cannot get my heart to bee weary and heavy laden; A Leopard can as well cleanse himselfe of spots, and an Ethiopian as well wash away the blackness of his skin, as I can wash my blacke soule, &c. One that hath no legs can as well walk to Rome as I can come to Christ. But know Christian, thy particular applying faith here is hindered by a meere misunderstanding of the promises: for though those promises require conditions, yet they require not conditions to be fulfilled in thy strength: but those required conditions are as well parts & branches of the free covenant of Grace as those promises which thou desirest to apply; therefore you shall find promises for the fulfilling those conditions in thy soule: God requires a wearinesse of sin, and a loathing of sin, and a sorrow for sin, as a condition, *Mat.* 11.29. *Isa.* 55.1,2. *God promiseth* to give this selfe-abhorring frame of spirit, and to work this loathing in his peoples soules, *Ezek.* 36.26,27,36. *chap.* 31. *Zach.* 12.10. *God requires* washing and cleansing as a condition, *Isa.* 1,16,17,18. *He hath promised* to worke this in the soule; Christ tells *Peter* he would do it, *Joh.* 13.8. And *David* prayes that God would do it for him, *Psa.* 51.2,7. which prayer was grounded upon a promise; and this washing is attributed to God as the working of his spirit; *Isa.* 4. *When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgement, and the spirit of burning.* God requires turning, and coming, and learning, and leaving sin, as a condition, but he hath promised to fulfill these, *Hos.* 14.8, but he hath said, *None can come unless the father draw him, Joh.* 6.44. and the Spouse without question grounding her prayer on a promise, saith, *Draw me, Cant.* 1.5. He hath *required turning* as a condition, *Ezek.* 33.11. *Jer.* 3.14. but hee hath *promised to worke this in the soule, Mat.*

Mat. 4 6. and upon this the Church prayes, *Jer.* 31.18 *Turne thou me and I shall be turned*: So that this is a certaine rule; *God requires no condition of a promise which he hath not promised to fulfill in us*: And whatsoever spirituall action is any where required of us as a duty, he hath some-where promised to bestow upon us as a dispensation of free Grace. Therefore I would have the soul in such a condition, when it stumbles at the condition of a promise, seek out those promises where God promiseth to fulfill those conditions in it, and particularly apply them, and rely upon God for making them good, and direct its prayers accordingly. So I have done with the first thing required in the soul for the particular application of the promises, *viz.* a cleare understanding of the promises, for which I have given three Rules. Now in regard that at all times there may not be in a true beleeving soule a cleare understanding of the promises; I conclude there may be true faith in the soule that at all times cannot make a particular application. But I hasten to

The second thing, which is requisite in the soule that doth truly rely, or that can particularly apply the promises, and that is *a cleare understanding of its own condition*; for how can I truly and particularly apply a promise to the wound of my soule, when I do not understand truly what wound my soule hath? Now a true beleeving soule may have a very false estimate of its own condition: Thus had *David* and *Asaph*, and the Church, they thought they were cast off, *Psal.* 43.2. *Psal.* 44.9. *Psal.* 60.1. *Psal.* 74.1. 77.7 89.38. If I think that a part of my body is gangrened, I will never apply Physick to it, because I know it is in vain: So, so long as the soule conceives that its condition is irrecoverable, its sins unpardonable, that applying promises to it is but applying warm clothes to a dead man; it will never apply. Now such a temper may be in the beleeving soule, occasioned by

2.

by the violent temptations of Satan, by dark clouds of melancholly, or the like: it apprehends its sins not pardonable, or at least not pardonable as yet to the soule. O! (saith the soule) *I have sinned against the Holy Ghost, what good will it do to me to apply promises? I am damned.*

It is a temptation which Sathan ordinarily hurt or last troubles beleeving soules with: I have answered that case of Conscience particularly, and therefore shall not enter into a particular discourse of it now. Now till the soule be brought so far truly to understand its owne condition, that its wounds are curable, and to cry unto God for the healing and cure of them; it cannot be expected that it should particularly apply any promises, as plaisters for the healing; and in regard I say that there may be some misjudging of the soules true estate in a gracious soul, there may also be a want of this peculiar faith. It is true, it is given by all sober Divines as the least degree of faith to beleeve that my sins are pardonable, and to run and fly, and cry unto God for pardon of them: but yet through the distemperature of the soule, even this thing, that the soules sins are pardonable, which is generally beleeved, and is the soules foundation upon which ground it humbles it selfe, and cries and prayes, may not be beleeved by the soule that yet hath true faith, or at least beleeved very darkly, and with a great deale of doubting.

3. The third and last thing which I will instance in, which must be found in that soule that shal particularly apply a generall promise as its particular portion, *is a constant wonderfull working of the powerfull Spirit of God upon the soule*: For let a soule never so truly understand its own condition, and never so truly understand the vertue of the promise, and never so fully conceive that the promises have an adequate proportionable vertue for the healing of its particular wounds; yet unless the spirit of God by a wonderfull powerfull worke of

grace

grace doth lay the salve upon the sore, and apply the promises unto the soule, it cannot be done; it is with a man that hath lost his hands, or the use of them, and suppose him to have a sore in his back; let him never so truly understand the nature of his disease, and the vertue of the salve with which the plaister is spread that is to be applied to the sore, hee is not able yet to apply it and lay it on for cure; the hand of the Chirugion, or some other for him must do this; So it is with the soule, *Rom.* 8.16. *The Spirit it selfe must beare witnesse with our spirits, that we are the children of God:* now unlesse that be witnessed, we have nothing to do with the promise; the children of the promise must be the children of God; and in being the children, they become heires of the promise, as the Apostle disputes, *Gal.* 3. It is a sweet and remarkable expression of *David* to this purpose, *Psa.* 119. v. 49. *Remember the word unto thy servant upon which [thou] hast caused me to hope.* It is God and his spirit that must cause us to hope and trust in his Word: Now in regard that the Sints and Servants of God may, though they alwaies have the Spirit dwelling in them, yet sometimes have the Spirit not so fully and powerfully acting in them the strong and powerfull actings of the Spirit, it being the effects of God manifestive love, which may be more or lesse in a Christian, though his elective love admits of no degrees: I say, in this regard I conceive a Christian may have true saving Faith, and yet not for the present at all times be able to apply the promises with a particular Faith as its own proper and peculiar portion. And now you have heard the reasons, which may be reduced shortly that:

Rom. 8.16.

Psal. 119. 49.

1. Because there may be a misunderstanding or a clear ignorance of the vertue of the promises, which must be understood before they be particularly applyed.

2. Because there may bee a misunderstanding of the soules condition: it may say there is no hope, and judge its wounds incurable.

3. Because there may want such a constant powerfull working of the spirit of God in the soule as must be joyned with the soules peculiar application, and yet there may be true faith.

For the first, I conceive *the particular applying of the promise with a confidence, they are my portion, doth argue a sense of faith, which may not be in the soule, and yet true faith be in it.*

Secondly, *Because as a man must not be judged to bee no man, because he wants his power to act reason in a Feaver; So the estimate of the truth of Faith that is in the soule must not bee taken in the distemperature of the soule;* When under heavy temptations; or dark and melancholly apprehensions; or over-pressing afflictions; or sad desertions.

Thirdly, *Because there is a difference betweene resting out of a principle of hope, which argues only a reliance, and dependance,* and out of a principle of certainty and perswasion, applying. The truly beleeving soule, when out of desertions, and from under temptations, and not burthened with afflictions and melancholly, doth alwaies apply the promises with an application of hope; it hopes they belong to it, though not alwaies with an application of perswasion; now the application of hope and the resting out of a principle of hope, provided there be an acting accordingly, is enough to save, *Rom.* 8.24. *We are saved by hope,* 1 *Cor.*15.19. *Col.*1.27. But yet this we must not rest in, but labour for a full perswasion, *the full assurance of hope,* Heb.6.13. Thou mayest *apply thy selfe to the promise,* when thou cast not *apply the promise to thee:* But of this more in the next Sermon.

For hope which is seen is no hope. Rom.8.24. But our hope must be lively 1 Pet.1.3,4.

SERM.

SERM. XIII.

MAR. 9. 24.

Lord I believe, help my unbelefe.

CHAP. II.

Concerning those weaknesses that may accompany the highest act of Faith, viz. Assurance: And how to satisfie the soule that scrapleth its faith, because it cannot be assured at all, or weakly and unconstantly.

MY subject is to discover what doubts and weaknesse may be in relation to the last and highest act of faith in a gracious soul; for there is nothing more ordinary then to heare such complaints as these from a gracious soule: *Alas never tell me of faith, I have no opinion at all that ever I shall be saved; never did poore soul live at such uncertainties; I pray, I look upward, I desire, I faint, I groan, I swoon, and yet not a drop of cordiall*

water of perſwaſion that my Chriſt will afford me to revive my dying ſpirit; or if I do ſometimes catch up a perſwaſion in my ſoule, and come to think that I have an intereſt in God, it is but a bare thought, and ſo weake, that it is ſcarce able to ſtand a day; ſometimes indeed for a day or a week, or a month together, I could bleſſe my ſoul in a good condition; but then againe, I am as full of doubts and fears; and is there any certainty in the Faith? Am I not like a wave of the Sea, toſt about with thouſands of windes? One while I think I am ſure of heaven of glory, and am as it were wrapt up into a third heaven, and the diadem of glory is ſitting on to my head: another while I am thrown down to hell, and me thinks every Devill is tracing me. I will (with the help of my God) endeavour to ſatisfie thee, and ſhew thee what weakneſſe may conſiſt with this act, and in relation to this act of Faith, in theſe enſuing Concluſions.

Conclu. 1. *Thou maieſt have a true and a certaine faith, and ſuch an one as will riche ſave thee, and yet have no aſſurance of thy ſalvation.* Indeed, my ſeverall Sermons that I preacht upon this ſubject, do all concurre to the proofe of this truth: for if a Chriſtian may have ſaving Faith, and yet ſo much weakneſſe and doubting conſiſt and be contemporaneous with it in the ſoule, it will neceſſarily follow, that Aſſurance is not the *minimum quod ſic*, the leaſt degree of ſaving Faith. But now it lying in my way, I ſhall ſpeake ſomething more diſtinctly to it. There are Opinions on the right hand and on the left, concerning this ſublime act of our Faith.

1. *The Papiſt denies any poſſibility of Aſſurance*, and reviles that precious Doctrine as licentious; and pleads onely for a generall faith, to beleeve the hiſtory of the Word and the Articles of Faith, *&c.*

2. *The Antinomians on the other ſide, deny any Faith to be true faith that is accompanied with any kind of doubting*; a full aſſurance they will make the *minimum quod ſic*,

sie, the least Faith that can help a man to heaven. Some Reverend Writers living near the time of the reigne of that Popish Doctrine, denying any thing of perswasion to come into the nature of true saving Faith, and setting themselves in full opposition to it, have not a little (though unwillingly) contributed to the last opinion, defining *faith to be a perswasion of the pardon of our sins, and of a pardon past and done*, &c.

I have already shewed you, that the essence and marrow of justifying Faith consists in the soules receiving of, and resting it selfe, and relying upon God for eternall salvation, not in the soules assurance that God is its God; in the soules going out, not in its coming in; in its direct act, not in its reflex act; And therefore our Divines make a distinction betwixt a soules *application of its selfe to the promise*, and *a soules application of the promise to it selfe*; and grant that there may bee in the soule a certainty of Faith in respect of the Object, though not an assurance of Faith in respect of the Subject. We will a little enquire how perswasion comes into the nature of justifying Faith. There is a double distinction, which I have noted before, and shall here repeat, would be observed concerning this perswasion.

First, there is a difference betwixt a *perswasion*, and a *believed Perswasion*, or a *full Perswasion*.

Secondly, there is a great deale of difference betwixt a *Perswasion eying the future*, and *relating to the present*; There may be in a gracious soule a perswasion, though he sales he is not perswaded; There is a great deale of difference betwixt *Faith*, and the *Sense* and *feeling of Faith*, as I shall shew you more hereafter.

Secondly, there may be in a soule a certaine perswasion, though not a full perswasion. In all Faith there is a perswasion, but in all Faith there is is not a full perswasion; the word in Scripture translated full perswasion is πληροφορία, *Rom.* 4, 21. It is said that *Abraham* was fully

perſwaded, it is but in oppoſition to doubting of unbeliefe. being ſo, ſaith the Text, *He ſtaggered not through unbeleefe*, and ſo *Rom.* 14, *Let him that eateth be fully perſwaded*, that is, ſo perſwaded that that he doth not eate with any ſcruple of mind, or doubting of ſpirit; I may be perſwaded of a thing that yet I am not fully perſwaded of, but have ſome doubts of; yet when my reaſons for the affirmative are more then for the negative, my mind begets a perſwaſion, and enters a perſwaſion in my ſoule from the Major vote of reaſon; Now I cannot be ſaid to be fully perſwaded, unleſs my ſoule runs without a rub: as it is ordinary amongſt us, when we are informed by credible witneſſes of ſuch a thing done, we may bee perſwaded it is true, and really beleeve the truth of it, and yet will not ſweare it, and perhaps ſhall have ſcruples and doubts, unleſſe we ſa wit our ſelves, *&c.* So a Chriſtian may be perſwaded that Gods love is towards him, but till he feeles it as well as think it, he will hardly have Πληροφορίαν a full perſwaſion without any manner of doubts or ſcruples concerning it.

Againe, *There is a great deale of difference betwixt a perſwaſion for the preſent, and a perſwaſion for the future*; I am forced to put it in theſe Termes for want of other; I meane betwixt an aſſurance that my ſins are actually pardoned, and a perſwaſion that they are pardonable, and decretally and meritoriouſly pardoned, and I ſhall feele at laſt the ſeale of Gods love; I muſt ſpeake here according to the manner of men: it is true, it may ſound harſhly, that a Chriſtian ſhould beleeve only that God will pardon his ſins, and will juſtify him, I know there be ſome learned and pretious men that hold that the elected ſoule is pardoned, and formally juſtifyed before he beleeves, and ſo would make our juſtification, (as Maſter *Burgeſſe* ſaith wittily) nothing *but the fetching a Copy out of the Court-roll*; but I am of his minde in his late Treatiſe of Juſtification, *Page* 17.8. where he gives

gives severall Arguments against this Opinion, As,

First, *If it bee so, then all the Elect were then made blessed and happy, their sins not being imputed, contrary to* Eph. 2. 3.

Secondly, *Because this Doctrine would make justification only to be declarative; when the Scriptures tell us that our sins are charged upon us till we believe.*

Thirdly, *Because Christ cannot as an head represent those that are not his members: now before actuall believing we are no members of Christ*; Indeed meritoriously and vertually our sins are pardon'd before we believe: and our souls are justified before we believe: but I (with him) cannot see how we are formally and actually justified before we believe: and to his Arguments give me leave to add a fourth.

See the Arguments against this answered in M. *Brugesse* his Treatise of justification, P. 180, 181.

Fourthly, *Pardon of sin and justification, it is an acquitting of the guilty soule before God for the righteousnesse of another; now how the soule should be actually acquitted before it be actually and formally guilty, I cannot understand.* And therefore I say, a soule may be perswaded that its sins are pardonable, and shall bee pardoned, and accordingly truly rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of them, which is true Faith, though it cannot be fully perswaded that its sins are pardoned. And thus much may briefly serve to have noted how far perswasion and assurance necessarily come into the nature of true and saving Faith, and how not: And concerning it I shall only nominate these conclusions to you, as containing the whole truth concerning it.

First, *That a Christian may have saving Faith, though he cannot be fully perswaded that God hath actually pardoned and blotted out his sins, and formally justified him*; for a believing that my sins are formally pardoned, is to believe I am justified, and is the Faith of a justified person, not justifying Faith (properly so called.)

Secondly, *That a Believer may have true saving faith, though*

though hee could never yet at all be perswaded that God had actually, and formally justified his soule by pardoning his sinne. This is still the application of the promise to the soule, and a reflex act of Faith which conduceth more to the soules comfort than its formall justification.

Thirdly, *That a Christian may have true justifying Faith; though he cannot at all times fully and unquestionably perswade that God will pardon his sins*; a rationall man in a Feaver may have lost his actings of reason, though while he hath the being of a man, reason hath a being in him; the tongue may bely the heart when the actions cleare it; A Christian may be at *will God pardon me* with his tongue, when his heart really thinks he will, and he manifestly shews it by crying, fasting, fearing to sin, lying groveling at the doore of free grace.

Fourthly, *That a Christian cannot have true saving justifying Faith, unlesse he doth (I do not say, unlesse hee thinke he doth; or unlesse he saies he doth, but unlesse he doth) believe and is perswaded that God will pardon his sin*: it is easily perceived by its resolving not to leave crying, praying, walking holily and circumspectly, that it is perswaded in this particular, that it is best both simply and in comparison to draw neere to God, and rely upon his grace, and so in event (saith Mr *Ball*) is sure of salvation, and yet would give a world to be assured of Gods favour, and fully perswaded that its sins are pardoned.

Ball upon Faith, p. 82.

Fifthly, *That it is false that the Papists say, no particular assurance ought or is to be looked for, or may be procured*, it may bee procured, and it ought to be sought for; this might easily be proved: but I shall not meddle with it, it being not my worke, and it being a question would take up a great deale of time: but I shall rather refer him that doubts of this to those learned men that have sufficiently managed this quarrell against the Papists.

willets Synopsis Papismi, p. 974, 975.

Perkins 3. vol. 220. 2. d. 1. vol. 542. 2. b. 542. 1. 2. 564. 1. d. 543. 1. d.

Ball

Ball upon Faith, 2 *Part. ch.* 8. *p.* 79. 80. 81. *Downams* Warfare *part.* 2. *l.* 2. *c.* 8. *p.* 102. *sect.* 2. *p.* 103. *col.* 1. 30. 1 c 4. *sect.* 6. *c.* 9. *p.* 106. *part.* 1. *l.* 2. *c.* 11. *p.* 118. *cap.* 13. *p.* 117. S 1. *cap.* 14. *c.* 11. and many others who have largely discussed this point, and maintained this truth.

Sixthly and lastly, *It is as false that the* Antinomians *and* Libertines *hold, that with this well-grounded full perswasion, there is no faith in the Soule*; this is a learned Writer of our owne in severall parts of his Booke hath made out against them; Thou mayest have true saving faith, though for the present thou canst not be fully perswaded that thy sins are pardoned: yea, though thou mayest thinke that they are not pardonable, (though some accidentall temptation over-powring thee, or some corruptions hindring the last actions of Faith,) yet thou mayest be perswaded that they are pardonable, and at that time it will appeare to all the world that thou art perswaded they shall be pardoned to thy soule; by thy fearing to offend God, and thy carefulnesse to please him, by thy crying, fasting, weeping, lying at the feet of divine grace, and resolving if thou perishest, to perish at the gate of heaven, and meet with hell there if thou meetest with it any where: Nay, be not mistaken, this thy Faith is 1 certaine, and 2 strong, as well as saving. *Rutherfords* Christs dying for sinners, v. codicem.

First, *It is saving*. That I have already shewed you, when I fully shewed you that the essence and pitch of justifying Faith was a receiving of the Promise, and a fiduciall rolling our selves and hanging upon the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon. Now as it is saving, 1.

Secondly, *so it is strong*; That faith (saith a precious Author) is argued to be strong that hath no light of comfort, but walks in darknesse upon the margin and borders of an hundred deaths. *Davids* Faith was a strong Faith, when though all Gods waves were upon him, yet he *called upon God daily*. *Psa.* 88. 7. 8. 9. when the soule is so far from being perswaded that it is a lovely 2.

one in the Lords eyes, that it conceives it ſelfe a damned wretch in the Lords ſight, & only ſees a ſparkling light in a crevis of the window, and by a little pinhole, a beame of hope comes in, and it thinks, well, my ſins are yet pardonable, yet I dare not ſay there is no hope: yet I know not what to think, my ſins are great Goale-ſins, I am perſwaded that if my name be in the Charter of grace, it is in the bottome; and it is ſometimes ready to think that the little glimmering of light it ſees, is rather the counterfeiting light of a Glow-worme than the triumphing light of the Sun: yet the ſoule is raviſhed with that particle of light, and goes and kiſſeth the hole that gives it paſſage, and ſaies, well, here's all my comfort, my ſins are yet pardonable, I ſee the ſhip of my ſoule is wrackt; poſſibly this bit of board may ſave my life, I wil on to it, if I periſh I periſh; I will not loſe this pin-hole light, I will cry, faſt, weep, and pray; Lord, ſay my ſins are pardoned, I am perſwaded thou canſt pardon them, and if thou wilt, thou canſt make me cleane; Lord I here will I lie, filthy, bloody, full of ſores at the Poole of *Bethesda*, I will not ſtir a ſtep from the Poole, I will lie in the way till thou haſt cured me: I ſay this doth argue a ſtrong faith; the perſwaded aſſured ſoule hath cables of comfort, who would feare the breaking of them? God doth not rap his fingers ſo often as this poore ſoul; This Beleever hath but a twine thread to hang upon; yet he catcheth hold, and ſaies, this ſtraw ſhall beare my ſoules weight; yea, God raps off his fingers often, his life is full of doubts and feares, yet he holds and wil not ſtir a ſtep; doth it not argue a great reliance? The woman of *Canaan* had no aſſurance of Chriſts favour, *Mat.* 15.21. ſhe cried, *he anſwered her not a word*, v. 23. nay, when ſhe made friends to him, he will neither hear her nor her friends Mediation, (though they were Chriſts owne Diſciples) ſtill ſhe comes and worſhippeth him, he chides her; (this yet argued no aſſurance) ſhe

she replies; he saies, *Great is thy faith*, v. 28. Mr *Rutherford* noteth sweetly upon that, that *the fewer Externals that faith needeth, the stronger it is within; little evidence, much adherence speaketh a strong faith.* Now though that perswasion bee an inward work, yet the grounds are externals; for the strength or weaknesse of perswasion is moved by the compass of sense, the lesser my grounds are, if my adherence be the same, the stronger is my faith; if I will trust my friends little finger as much as the whole hand, doth it not the more argue my confidence in his strength, and my reliance upon him, that hee will do what he can to hold me? Oh! it is a sweet thing to see a soul hang upon Christs little finger, that onely apprehendeth a generall promise, and is perswaded that its sins are pardonable, and somtimes doubts of this too; yet it cries and hangs, and weeps, and relies, and scornes to lay its little finger upon any thing else, any selfe-sufficiency, any creature-righteousnesse to beare it up; it argues a strong faith: O soule, be not deceived! Great is thy faith; nay, and such a *faith may be certaine too*, thou maiest live at uncertainties upon a certaine faith: The bruised reed is not broken, the smoaking flax is not quenched, thy faith is doubly certaine, though thy life of faith is full of incertainties.

1. *It is certaine in respect of the Object.*

2 *It is certaine in respect of the Event.*

1. *In respect of the object:* A weake faith doth not argue weaknesse in Free-grace, or weak efficacy in the blood of a pretious Jesus; the pur-blind eye doth as certainly see the Sun, as he whose eyes are best, the weake pur-blind eyed soule doth certainly see, apprehend, and relie upon Christ, though not so clearely and comfortably.

2. *Thy faith is certaine in respect of the Event:* Even as every thing that hangeth upon a pin or a peg, is as sure as the pin or peg on which it hangeth: So that soule

that hangs upon the mercy and Free-grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rocky promises of salvation, is as sure as the promise, &c.

And thus I think I have sufficiently cleared the first thing, that a Christian may have a true saving Faith; yea, and such a one as shall be strong and certaine, both in respect of the Object and the Event, that yet hath not this sublime act of Faith, which is assurance. I hasten to a second Conclusion, and all the rest of my Propositions with respect to a full perswasion that our sins already are actually and formally pardoned.

2. Conclus. *Thy assurance and perswasion that thy sins are pardoned, may be a true perswasion and assurance, though but weak; or to speak more properly, you may have this reflex act of Faith, and be perswaded that your sins are pardoned, and this perswasion may be a true reflex act of Faith, and yet not constant in degrees.* Sometimes it may be weaker, sometimes stronger. I call the weakest perswasion wrought in the soule, that its sins are pardoned a reflex act of Faith; for I do not think that it is a piece of Faith necessary to the justification of a soule, that it should beleeve that its sins are really and actually pardoned, though it be a beam of grace that the soule should love, and looke after more then the world; and it is, and ought to be more precious to a beleeving soule, then all the rocks of Gold, or mountaines of Silver, or beds of Spices, or ten thousand rivers of Oyle; yet I say, I do not take it to be an act of justifying Faith, but of the justified soule. Now this may be true in the soule, though it be sometimes weaker, and sometimes stronger; That soul that at all times is perswaded that its sins are pardoned and actually remitted, is not alwaies alike perswaded of it. It is a beame of Gods manifestative love which admits of degrees. As upon the earth, in the day-time there is alwaies some light, though through some interposition of clouds the light is not alwaies alike; so in Christi-

Christians that the Lord hath brought to this degree that they do really beleeve that their sins are pardoned, though through the sun-shines of Gods manifestative love upon their souls, they for the most part think so, yet they are not alwaies alike perswaded of it. I do verily beleeve that *David* generally was in this temper; and who so peruses his pretious Book of Psalmes, will finde that he takes the pardon of sins for granted; yet who so againe peruses the severall Psalmes, will easily perceive that *Davids* perswasion was not always alike, as any one may see by comparing; *Ps.6.* and *Ps.41. ver.11.* you shall find him in some Psalms altogether singing, and praising, and triumphing, not a mention of a tear; but in others, declaring perswasion, yet wants; expressing confidence, yet teares; as in that sixth Psalme, *ver.1,2,3,4.* compared with *ver.9.* Sometimes the heavens are so cleare to gracious soules, that the shinings of grace dazzle their soules so much, that nothing will satisfie them but heaven; *Now Lord let thy servant depart in peace*; O that now I might dye and be incorporated into glory! they are so wrapt into the third heavens, that they cannot speak their joy; another while it is lower water with their soules; the Moones influence is not as it was. *David*, I am confident, would have been glad of an errand to have sent him out of the world to heaven, *Psalme 34.* But the good man againe in the 39. Psalme, prayes as heartily for his life, as any poore wretch could have done, that lay under an apprehension of a past sentence of hell against him, 1 *Pet.1.8.* we reade of a rejoycing, with which beleevers should rejoyce, even with *joy unspeakable*, but there was not such a constant overflowing and full tide of joy alwaies sure. It is a sure note, that manifestative love hath its degrees, and it is from a strong influence of Gods manifestative love to the soule, that the soul hath such a perswasion; now had I leasure, I might at large here tell you, at what times commonly

the spring-tide of assurance flowes highest, and on the contrary, what may make the apprehension weaker, and at what times it is ordinarily most weak.

1. *Commonly just upon Gods returne after a long desertion and sad expectation, the soules assurance is very great and its perswasion very high*: God turns mid-night into mid-day: The soule then brings the Lord Jesus Christ into *her mothers house, into the chambers of her that conceived her*: commonly when the husband comes home, after a long absence and long expectation, more then ordinary tokens of love, and passages of love are discerned betwixt him and the wife of his bosome; Christ comes in then to make amends for his frown & lowrings, with he sweetest kisses and embraces: mid-winter is turned into a Mid-summer, this you shall find constantly in *Davids* Psalmes; and so on the contrary, when the soule is under desertions, if there be left yet a perswasion, that though God doth hide his face, yet he doth not hide his heart, yet it is but a weak and just living perswasion.

2. 2. *And commonly at greatest distresse, God comes in with strongest perswasions and fullest assurance*; as when the Christian is call'd to Martyrdom, or call'd to dye, or called to do any great services, that it distrusts its own strength, and is ready to feare or faint, that nothing but the most reviving, quick, and hot cordiall water can keep the soule alive, and able to undergo that great and extraordinary service that God cals for at his hands; ordinarily now at such times, the Lord is pleased to come in with a fulness into the soul. (It was but yesterday you heard by my Reverend Brother, that ordinarily God comes in with signes which are evidences to sense, when the soule is in greatest streights;) and wee shall find that Gods promise made to *Abraham* was often renewed to him, & to *Isaac*, and to *Iacob*; but the diligent Reader shall observe, that God pickt out that time, or those

thoſe times when hee called his Saints to ſome hard work, in doing of which their hearts might ſink concerning the Lords promiſe. The originall promiſe was in *Gen.*12.7. It was renewed to him, *chap.* 13. *verſ.*15. when hee was to go out of the land, hee ſcarce knew whether, and leave it to others to poſſeſſe; and to *Iſaac* when he went to *Gerar*, *Gen.*26.4. and to *Iacob* going downe to *Egypt*, *Gen.*46.4. At ſuch times the children of God are to double work, and had need of double, ſtrength, and ſo a double ſubſiſtance; when *Eliah* was to go in the ſtrength of his meat forty daies, he had need eat a good meale; the Angell therefore twice admoniſhed him, to *ariſe and eate*, 1 *Kings* 19 6,7. The journey was great which he had to go: the frequent Stories of the Martyrs make this good; when the Lord call'd them to their great ſervice at the ſtake, hee prepared them for their double worke with double comfort, raviſhing their ſoules with glory, *and ſo often, that God makes many of his deare Saints live upon ſhort commons all their life time, when he brings them to the hard work of dying, he gives them a glimpſe of glory.* This is a note of a precious Divine, who gives experiences of it, & it is ſpecially when they dye ſtrong torturing deaths; for alwaies it is not ſeen; it may be they have had all comforts before, and may dye in conflicts; God will try how they can walk in the ſtrength of what they have had, or if they have had no bread till then, God will hardly call them to die without giving them a cruſt, *yet* (as he ſweetly ſaith) *God walks in liberty here, and will not have us to limit the breathings of the Holy Ghoſt to jump with the houre of our dying; for we may make an Idoll of a begun heaven, as if it were more excellent then Chriſt.* By this you ſee (inſtead of much might be ſaid) that aſſurances may be weaker and ſtronger, yet true; and this will be further made good by my laſt concluſion, which I will but touch, and that is this:

Rutherfords Tryall of faith

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Concl. 3. *Thou maiest have had, and againe have a true assurance and full perswasion, and for the present have none of all:* I have spoken so much to this before, that I shall need adde very litle: It is necessary to constitute the true direct act of Faith, that it bee a continued act; and that soule never did truly rely at all, that never since it began to rely, ceased to rely; but for a reflex act, it may be wanting even in the soule that hath had it, and may have it againe, if God will please to turne his face towards it; nay, I will question whether ever that Christian had true assurance or no, that hath had it, as he pretends, without any intermission; for so long as there remaines a Devill to tempt, or a flesh to allure to sins, there will be sometimes wants of full assurance; yea, if there were none of them both, I would make it a great question, whether the wise God would ever keep such a dispensation of his love in a full Sun-shine to any soule (though loved never so dearely) I am afraid though wee have much talk of Faith, of assurance now adaies in the world, if the Lord should come to sift the hearts of his poore creatures, he would scarce find the mustard-seed Faith of adherence. 1. Overpowring temptations. 2. Overgrowing corruptions. 3. Naturall distempers of Melancholly. 4. Divine desertions shall hinder assurance and make the act to cease; and judge you then what soule it is probable shall have an incessant, constant act. But I have done with this last thing. And now I have shewed you what doubts and weaknesses may consist with every act of Faith in a true gracious soule.

SERM.

SERM. XIV

LUK. 17. v. 5.

Lord, increase our Faith.

CHAP. 13.

How to comfort that soule that thinkes it hath not true Faith, because it doth not feele God strengthning it to those acts of Grace which is ought to act.

I Will take leave here (apprehending it a reasonable place to bring it in,) to speak something to one scruple of conscience, which doth often perplex many a good Christian; and that is want of feeling of Gods love, &c. *Ah!* (saith many a poore soule,) *did I but indeed know that God and Christ were my redeemer and Portion, then I think I should not need be much instructed to wipe away this sadnesse and dejection of spirit, but I cannot feele any*

such thing. And this makes a Christian think that it neither doth nor may beleeve.

Now there is a double feeling for the want of which many good soules often complaine, and upon the want of which they raise to themselves conclusions against beleeving. For want of a distinction I will presume for once to coyne one, *There is a feeling of peace, and a feeling of strength.*

1. The feeling of peace, is, *when a poore Christian apprehends God appeased to its soul, and feels him, saying, I am thy God, the God of thy salvation*; this is that perswasion which is the highest reflex act of Faith, of which I spake the last time, and shewed you what degrees and abatements it might meet with in a true Beleever: Now the true Christian may want, though hee doth feele Gods spirit carrying him on to acts of mortification and vivification, *&c.* Of this I shall not speake, having spoken the last time, how far it may be wanted, weakened, or abated, or discontinued, even in Gods true and dearest children.

1. But there is another feeling which for distinction sake, I call, *a feeling of strength*; when a Christian, though he doth not feele Gods peace sealed up & assured unto his soule, yet he cannot deny but he feeles his soule carryed out by God unto duties, to love him, to desire him, to delight in him, *&c.* Now this later feeling ought to satisfie the soule, when, though God doth not please as yet, to *apply the promise to his soule*; yet hee feeles God inabling him *to apply himself to the promise*, which he feels God *changing and renewing his heart and affections*, *&c.* But here is that which many poor Christians want, and complaine for the want of: they will confesse, that could they but feele Gods strengthning them against their corruptions, and carrying out their hearts in acts of love, and desire towards him, *&c.* they would quiet themselves, and be very thankfull to him, if

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he would but give them so much of the morsels of Free grace as would keep spirituall life in them, and keep their hearts from dying for want of mouthfuls, although God would not yet please to let them sit down at the banqueting table of assurance, and eat of the sweet meat of that peace which passeth all understanding. If God would please to give them but such sips of his flagons as might stay them, though they wanted such dishes of apples to comfort them, it would suffice; but alas! this they want, and how can they believe? &c.

Now all that I shall speak to a Christian in this perplexity, I will reduce to these two heads:

1. *Something by way of Consolation*: And,
2. *Something by way Direction.*

First, *By way of consolation, I should propound these few things, as considerations which may tend through the blessing of God to the comforting of such soules in such streights.*

Consid. 1. *That not feeling, doth not argue a not being.* A thing may be though it be not felt; it is no Logick to infer a negative conclusion from our sense. Sometimes wee see not the beame of the Sun; the interposition of the Moon doth hinder us in an Eclipse from beholding its light; yea, darke clouds wee see ordinarily will do it; what shall wee therefore conclude that the Sun doth not shine? Or, that the Sun doth not cast an influence upon the Creatures? This we should call ridiculous. In like manner thou saiest, I do not feele God cast his influence of grace upon my soule, strengthening me against my corruptions, nor so shining upon me with beames of enlivening, quickning grace, my heart is not quick in his service, it is dead unto duties, and dull in them; I do not feele the heat of the Sun of Righteousnesse warming my soule with beames of love, &c. therefore wilt thou conclude God doth not do it? The

Psal.22.v.1.

Psalmist cries out for want of feeling, *Ps.*22.1. *My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health, and from the words of my roaring?* and so he goes on, v.2. *O my God, I cry by day time and thou hearest not, in the night, and have no audience.* Mark Christian! holy men may sometimes want feeling; did not God, think you, heare *David?* Had he indeed no audience according to his sad thoughts? *Ah!* (saith a Christian) *but there was some comfort, though he did not feele peace, yet he did feele strength*; he felt God inabling him to pray and cry, and seek him; but I cannot feele this. Harke yet once againe to *Asaph*, *Psal.*77.v.4. *I am so troubled that I cannot speake*, David, *Psal.*15.v.10,11,12. Hee praies to God, *to create a cleane heart, and renew a right spirit within him*, and v.14. to confirme him *with a free spirit*. And yet shall we think that at this time *David* had not the sweet influences of Gods holy Spirit? if so, wee are confuted from the foregoing verse, *Cast mee not away from thy presence, take not thy holy spirit from me*. By all which it may easily appeare that it is one thing not to feele God strengthening and quickning us, and another thing for him not to do it: The working of Gods Spirit within us is very secret, according to the nature of the spirit: we do not feele the starres influence upon us, nor yet the actings of our soules within us, and yet it is certaine, they have an influence upon us: and that our soules do subtilly and secretly act in all, in every part of our bodies: and therefore secondly,

Consid. 2. *That the truth of Gods love to thee in his acting in thee, is not so easily to be discerned in the acting and working of God, as in the effect of such acts and operations*; secret acts of spirituall substances are not to be discerned and understood *in agendo*, but *in effecto*, not in the doing, but when they are done; wee cannot feele the soules conveying of its influence and power of working through every part of the body; wee cannot understand,

ſtand, or ſee, or feele the time when it doth it, nor the manner how it doth it, &c. yet wee know it is done, and that is enough for us; thou canſt not ſee nor feele the acting of the vegetative ſoule in the plant, thou canſt not feele how it grows, or ſee when it grows, or underſtand the moment of its ſhooting out, yet thou ſeeſt it doth act; the plant is growne, and the vegetative ſoul in it hath queſtionleſſe been the internall principle of its growth. You may poſſibly ſee a man in ſome lethargick diſeaſe, or in a trance, that you ſhall not ſee or diſcern that his ſoule is yet in his body; you ſhall not diſcerne his pulſe to beat, nor diſcerne him to breath, but all poſſibly in the roome may judge him dead: yet his body keeps ſtill warm, doth not ſtiffen, or grow cold, his eies are not ſet, nor his chap fallen, and poſſibly by applying a glaſs to his mouth you may diſcerne he yet breaths, and lives, and conſequently you may gather the mans ſoule hath not yet taken its leave of the body, for then you know he would grow ſtiffe and cold: and ſo you conclude that his pulſe doth ſtill beat, though ſo obſcurely that you cannot feele or diſcerne it; ſo it may bee with thy ſoule (Chriſtian) the inviſible work of God in acting his grace in thee, quickning, ſtrengthening thee, moving thee to ſpirituall duties, if thou lookeſt to ſee it, and feele it acting, as thou maieſt feele the beating of thy pulſe upon thy wriſt, thou mayeſt be deceived, it may beat darkely and ſecretly, it is a ſecret work of a ſpirituall ſubſtance; and yet thou mayeſt be comforted in it, if thou wilt but looke to the effects; if thy ſoule and body do not grow ſtiffe and cold, and ſtinking with old ſins, and luſts, and baſe corruptions: there is ſome ſpirituall life that keeps thy ſoul warme; though thou canſt not feele Gods ſecret and ſpirituall working in thy ſoule in the very act of warming and quickning thee, and enabling thy ſoule to love him, and deſire after him; yet ſpeake truth, does not thy ſoule love him?

Doest thou not delight in him; Doest thou not desire after him? Come let us put a glass to the mouth of thy soule; here's a base lust and corruption, which if thou actest, thou shalt bewray the hatred of thy God to all the world; darest thou doe it wilfully and knowingly? Here is a prophane company that would be glad of thy company; and at the same time here's an Ordinance of God, at which if thou wilt be, thou mayest possibly suck a great deale of sweetnesse, and tast much of thy God: where wilt thou be? Wilt thou baulke thy Communion with God, rather than with prophane and ungodly men? If thou darest so, it is something; but on the contrary, doth no communion, no company please thee so as the company of the Saints of God? And doth no communion like thee so as the communion thou hast with thy God in his Ordinances? If so, thou hast some spirituall life in thee; for the dead man hath no such judicious palat; and if thou livest a spirituall, it is not thou *that livest, but Christ that liveth in thee*, and thou livest *by Faith in the Son of God*; thus thou maiest easily discerne that in the effects, which thou couldst not in the working of the cause. But *Alas!* (saith a poor Christian) *my willing and desiring is nothing: for though to will be present with me, yet I have no strength to performe.* And what *will you make a desire to beleeve and pray, Faith and prayer?* I answer, "raw desires and "wishes are no more beleeving, then *Esaus* weeping "for the blessing was the blessing, or *Balams* wish to "dye the death of the righteous, was the hapy end of "of such as dye in the Lord. But the sincere desires and "good wil of justified persons are accepted of the Lord "for the deed; and when Christ pronounceth such blest "as hunger and thirst after righteousnes, we say in that "sence, a sincere desire to pray and beleeve is materially "and by concomitancy a neighbour, and neere a kin to "beleeving and praying. A verball and a seminall inten-

Rutherford, p. 142.

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"tion to pray, beleeve, love Christ, do his will, is in the "seed of praying, beleeving and, &c. when the intention "is supernaturall, & of the same kind with the act, as the "seed is the tree: we say not so of naturall intentions "or desires, As *Abrahams* sincere intentions o offer "up his son, was the offering of his son, &c. But I go to a third consideration.

Thirdly, *Therefore consider that feeling at the best is but a deceivable and disputable evidence*; oft-times conclusions grounded upon sense are false, and sink in time. If thou judgest thy condition by feeling, thou mayest oft-times think God doth nothing for thee, though hee be at that instant fully enlivening thee, &c. And againe, thinke that God is at peace with thee, and that it carrieth thee out to duties, &c. when there is no such matter, and it is nothing else but the strength of naturall parts that carrieth thee out, &c. *Saul* thought he had a great deale of feeling, 1 *Sam.* 15 13. when he came to meet Gods Messenger, he cries out, *Blessed art thou of the Lord; I have kept the Commandements of the Lord.* But yet the following part of that story will tell you, that *Saul* was far enough off from any true feeling of peace and comfort: So without question those in *Mat.* 7.22. judged themselves to have a great deale of feeling of Gods strength, when they had prophesied in Gods name, and in his name cast out Devils, and in his name done many wonderfull works; yet Christ professeth he would say to many such, *I never knew you, depart from me, yee workers of iniquity*; thou cryest, thou dost not feele God carrying thee out in duties as many other Christians are, and that which thou callest Gods spirit in them, or in thy selfe, may be no such matter; it is not the courting of God with elegant expressions that argues the strength of God assisting; there is many a stammering non-sence prayer that hath more of the sweet spirit of God in it: there may be a full heart, though 3.

though it runs not out of the lips so fast, yea oftentimes the fulnesse of the heart causeth the straightnesse of the lips, just as the fulnesse of the vessell may occasion the water to run slowly out of the hole for want of vent or wind.

The Apostle saies; that *the Spirit of God helpeth our infirmities, with cries and groanes which cannot be uttered*; it doth not say, it helpeth our infirmities *with courtly expressions that cannot bee paralell'd*: Thou mayest when thou thinkest that God carries thee out with more strength and enlargement to duties, call and misconstrue that to be the strength and assistance of the Spirit of God, which is occasioned meerly from thy owne clearnesse and naturall spirit, when thou art in a little better veine of Rhetorick then thou wert. Mistake not, there is a distinction betwixt *Praying gifts*, and *Praying graces*; I observe it is said *Jacob* wrestled with God, (by vertue of strength from him.) This is the strength of the spirit: the spirits work is not to carry out our tongue in expressions, but our heart in zeale and importunity. It is not said that *Jacob scraped leggs* with God: no, *he wrestled*: wee are but ill Judges of feeling commonly, which makes feeling but a deceivable and disputable evidence.

4. Fourthly, consider, that *no Christian feeleth alwaies alike, yea, perhaps hath no cause to feele alwaies alike.* God to the best of his deerest servants doth sometimes measure an *Ephah*, and sometimes but an *Omer*: distinguish alwaies betwixt *the truth of Gods love to his deare children, and the actings, I meane the visible actings of his love*: that of God which is not seen, is alwaies full and certain to Christians, I meane his elective love, the yerning of his heart towards his deare children: there is of God also that may be seen, *Psal. 68. 24. They have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God in the Sanctuary*; Gods goings in a poore soule are

are sometimes very visible to a gracious soule, but sometimes his goings are more secret and invisible, yet he is alwaies going in acts of love and grace to his poore servants, only his goings are more mysterious and dark; God sometimes goes a meere foot-pace, just sets one foot before another in them, and towards them, sometimes he goes faster and more stronger in them, and apparantly towards them.

First, *Gods soft going in the soule may sometimes be a cause*, why the soule cannot feele. *Peter* had no reason to feele the strength of God alike, when he shamefully denied his Master in the high Priests Hall, as when hee durst venture to walke on the sea towards him. 1.

Secondly, *God withdraws some degrees* of his strength sometimes to try whether a Christian can stand upon the true legs of Faith, as well as upon the wooden legs of sense; the mother withdraws her hand sometimes to see how the child can go without trusting to the feeling of her hand guiding and supporting it. 2.

Thirdly, another cause may be in the Christian, why he cannot feele God carrying him out to acts of his grace in his strength alwaies alike; *The soule may possibly have lost its feeling*; the benummed member doth not feele; *in sicknesses and diseases of the body Nature may sometimes be so much infeebled, that sometimes the party affected falls into a dead swound, wherein he is deprived for a time, not onely of the use of his understanding reason and memory, but also of his sense, motion, and vitall function.* So it may be with a Christian; sin or the violence of some temptations of Sathan may be such, that the Christian cannot feele any thing; the soul cast into a swound, and deprived of all the spirituall faculties of it, faith, love, life, *&c.* no wonder the soule for the present doth not feele: the leg of the soule is asleep, the whole soule is benummed, how should it feele? but let it alone a little: as such a body (if not quite 3.

dead) will quickly returne to its sense againe and live, and feel, and move, &c. so likewise will the gracious soul quickly come to recover its life, and sense, and motion againe; though the soule seemes (to the judgement of sense) to have no sap or principle of life in it; yet consider it is winter-time with the soule, stay but till the spring and summer, while the frost hath done nipping and discolouring, and the soule will have its sap visible and recover its beauty againe: there is fire in the soul, though it be raked up in the night; wait but till the morning that the ashes be blown away, you shal see the fire of Gods spirit is not extinguished in the soule. *I sleep* (saith the Spouse) *but my heart waketh*: There is a waking heart, though there be no waking eye, the soule (as well as the body) in sleep is bereaved of sense: wait but till the morning and the soule will confesse it seeth, and hath recovered its senses againe. Thus for thy comfort know Christian, that thou couldest not justly expect to feele alwaies alike: for first, God doth not dispense alwaies alike: and secondly, if he did dispense alwaies alike, yet a benummed, ashy, winter-sleepy soul hath not that beauty, nor that sense, which a lively, healthy, well tempered, clear-spring-awakened soul hath.

5. Fifthly, consider, *That Gods strength may be seen in thee, when it is not seene and felt by thee*, the gracious soule is not alwaies, nay, is very seldome, a competent Judge of its selfe; the high Christian may often have a very low, yea, too low an opinion of it himselfe; the Christian is his owne worst construing Book, and especially too at some times: if *Paul* may be judge of himselfe, sometimes he is *the least of Saints*, and *the chiefest of sinners*, and *unworthy to be called an Apostle*. If *David* may be Judge of himselfe, *Psal.* 22. v. 6. *He is a worme and no man, yea, the very reproch of men.* So if many Christians may bee judges of themselves: Alas! *they cannot pray, they cannot love God, they cannot beleeve,*

they

they feele nothing of the ſtrength of God carrying them out; when (if ſtanders by may be Judges) there is a great deale of the ſtrength of God manifeſted in their hearts and carriages of their lives, and God is glorioufly diſcovered in carrying out their hearts ſo glorioufly, and ſweetly, and firmely for him as he doth: take a true Chriſtian, and this is a ſure rule, *That God and Gods people have far better opinions of him, than he hath of himſelfe*; now this may comfort thee, when other better and more experienced Chriſtians (by thy owne confeſſion) than thy ſelfe, can ſee more in thee, than thou canſt feele; the body in a dead ſwound feeles no life in it ſelfe, but all its vitall motions and functions are hindred: now therefore at ſuch a time, others in the roome are Judges of its life or death, they by obſerving the warmth of the body, the motion of the pulſe, or applying a glaſſe to the mouth of the ſwounding perſon, do perceive life in the man, that to his owne ſenſe, and perhaps to the ſenſe of ſome others is a dead carcaſſe.

Sixthly and laſtly, conſider, *That it is no Argument to warrant thee not to beleeve, becauſe thou doeſt not feele God carrying thee out by his armes of ſtrength in ſuch a manner to ſpirituall duties, and the acts of ſpirituall and ſaving graces as thou deſireſt, or perhaps expecteſt*; the reaſon of this is plaine, *becauſe it is my duty as well to beleeve for ſtrength, as for any thing elſe*; Sure I am, Gods promiſes are as much for ſtrength to act grace as for any thing elſe: and the promiſes of God are the Object of my Faith; it is my duty to beleeve the promiſes, *I will ſtrengthen thee* (ſaith God,) *I will help thee and uphold thee with the hand of my righteouſneſſe*: thou ſayeſt, this cannot I beleeve. Why? *Becauſe God doth not ſtrengthen me, and help me to carry out my heart in an act of Faith*: Thus thou beggeſt the queſtion; the queſtion is not whether thou oughteſt to beleeve when thou feeleſt God carrying thee on to be- 5.

lieving, &c. But whether thou oughteſt not to believe that God will ſtrengthen thee, and carry thee out to acts of beleeving and loving, &c. But ſome may ſay, What doth this differ from Free-will Doctrine? Can I beleeve unleſſe God doth ſtrengthen me to beleeve? Why, do you call upon a man to lay hold, when he complaineth that he wants hands, or upon a man to walk, when he tels you he cannot find that he hath any legs? Miſtake not Chriſtian; God hath ſaid, *I will ſtrengthen thee I will help thee, and uphold thee with the hand of my righteouſneſſe*: Now I ſay, it is thy duty to beleeve this promiſe of ſtrength and helpe, and I confeſſe that it is not in thy power to beleeve this promiſe, but God muſt ſtrengthen thee, and help thee before thou canſt beleeve this promiſe that hee will ſtrengthen thee and help thee; but yet I do not call upon one that hath no hands to lay hold, nor upon one that hath no legs to walk, but upon one that ſaith he doth not feele his legs, I call upon him to walke; and I call upon one *that doth not know and feel* that he hath hands to lay hold, &c. And this is ſenſe, and warrantable Divinity; Faith is not ſenſible and viſible to a Chriſtian in the habit, but only in the acts; I cal to thee to ſhew forth the habit of faith. Now it ſhall not excuſe thee from this duty, that thou canſt not feele thou haſt any habit of Faith; the habit of this pretious grace is inviſible. Thus have I given thee ſome conſiderations, which duly weighed and conſidered, may comfort thy ſoule under this perplexity. I have only one thing more to do, and that is to ſpeak a word or two of direction to ſuch ſoules to ſhew them what to do, that they may be comforted, in which I will be briefe.

1. First, then by way of direction, *Find out the cauſe and remove it*; the cauſes may bee various; I cannot name them all; but the great and ordinary cauſes may be, firſt, Gods will; ſecondly, thy own temper.

1. Gods will; he will not pleaſe perhaps to lead thee with

with so strong an arme at one time as at another; hee will try how thou wilt live by faith; sense is bread: he will have thee not to *live by bread only, but by every word that commeth out of the mouth of God.* Now sense and feeling, that is bread; if this be the cause (as it was in *Peter*) thou must not dispute but submit to it.

2. *The cause may be in thy self*; it may be thou art under some violent temptations of Sathan, or under the clouds or darkenesse of some sins or corruptions, or thy expectation of feeling, or sense may be too high, or thou mayest be wilfull, and not feele when thou maiest. These causes must be removed by faith, repentance, endeavour, obedience, *&c.* Hath sin benummed thee? Be humbled for this sin, and thou shalt feele: Art thou in desertion? beleeve and hope, and thou shalt feele againe. It is a knowne maxime, *Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.* But, 2.

Secondly, *Wait for feeling*: this is a part of thy duty in relation to this want, especially caused by Gods will, *Isa.* 40. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength like the Eagle,* Psal. 27. 14. *Wait on the Lord, be of Good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord*: wait with faith, and hope, and patience.

Thirdly, *Learne to live upon Gods word*: *man shal not live by bread only, but upon every word that commeth out of the mouth of God*: We are not to live by faith upon the incertainty of sense: All that that speaks is not Gospell; but we have a more sure and certaine livelihood, even the unchangable goodnes, and infallible goodnes of a God that cannot lie nor repent. Sense is deceiving, truth is infallible; doth sense say God do do not strengthen me? and doth Gods word say, these things I could not do if God did not strengthen me? whether it be now better to beleeve God, or deceivable sense, judg thou. 3.

Fourthly, *Learne to acknowledge Gods little finger*: 4.

thou doſt not find God lending his whole hand, perhaps not ſtrengthning thee in ſuch a meaſure to act grace in ſuch a degree; but know the leaſt ſtirring of the ſoule in a ſpirituall manner to a ſpirituall action is from God; fleſh and bloud could not do it; find out Gods little ſecret workings, look for theſe, thou wilt finde ſome of them in thy ſoule.

Fifthly and laſtly, *Act contrary to thy mind:* we bid the ſick man eate againſt his ſtomack; thou ſaieſt I cannot pray, I cannot beleeve: why? I do not find God giving me a heart to it; do it againſt thy mind; thou ſhalt find ſtrength to do it and *comfort* from doing it.

This learned Mr *Rutherford* gives great reaſon for; as 1. *Becauſe it is ordinarily ſeen that a Chriſtian may begin to pray with ſad and fleſhly complaints of unbeleefe, yet going on, the breathing of the Holy Ghoſt will fill the ſailes,* &c. *if we be doing,* the Lord will be with us, 2. *Our indiſpoſition is a ſin, and doth not free us from that duty.* 3. *We are to pray againſt weakneſſe and indiſpoſition, and for ſtrength and freedome of ſpirit.* 4. *We are commanded in the day of trouble and temptation to pray,* Pſa. 50. 15. Mat. 6. 13. 5. *It is a ſinfull omiſſion in us not to pray, and act, not to do what we can, though we feele weakneſſe,* &c. and ſeverall other Reaſons hee gives, *p* 486 487. *&c.* Now doeſt thou not feele the ſtrengthning influence of Gods Spirit carrying thee on to thy duty? yet do it, that is the way to come to have a feeling: *ſtir up the grace of God that is in thee,* 2 Tim. 1. 6. God complained, *Iſa.* 64. v. 7. *That there was none that cal'd upon his name, or ſtirred up himſelfe to lay hold upon him.* It is the ordinary practice of Free-grace, to ſend in ſenſe and ſtrength upon thy endeavours, yet freely not as merited by them. And thus I have ſhortly diſpacht all that I have to ſay to this ſcruple of conſcience, where the ſoule complaines for want of feeling, *&c.*

Rutherford, Chriſt dying.

An

AN

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